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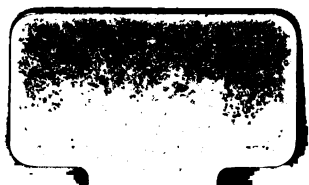
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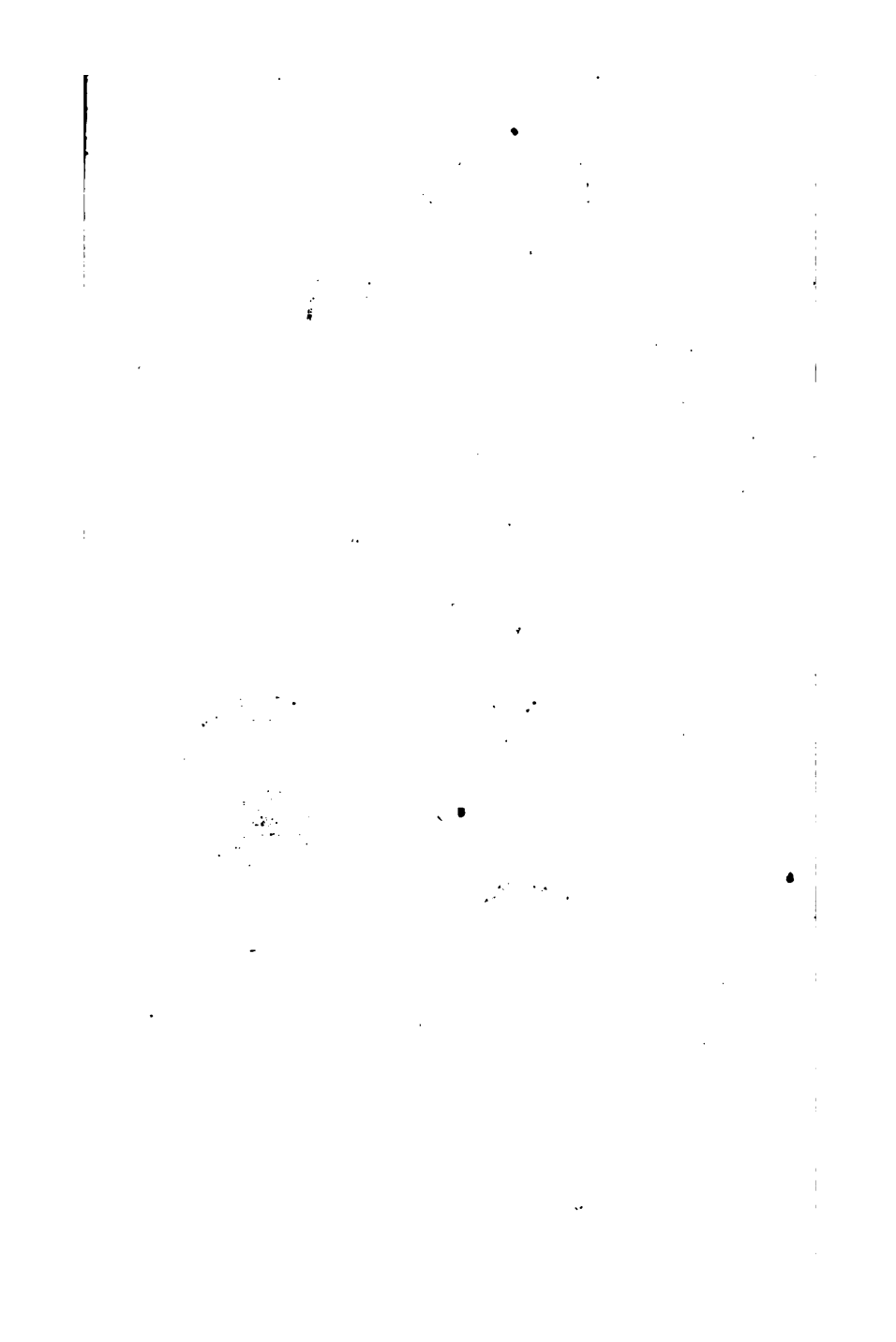
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H. D. Morris

With Harriet's kind love.



THE LISTENER IN OXFORD

BY THE AUTHOR OF
'CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE,' 'THE LISTENER,'
&c. &c.

SECOND EDITION.



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PREFACE.

WITH much reluctance this work was undertaken. Controversy has never been "the Listener's" sphere, nor is it now her choice: it is not even her design: for in the composition of the following pages, she has had nothing so little in her mind as to engage in disputation with those writers whose opinions she has denied and endeavoured to expose. They will not read the book. It is not intended for their reading; and it can tell them nothing that they do not know. It seems to be the peculiar character of these "last days," that every device of Satan for the affliction of the Church, is

begotten, not of ignorance, but of knowledge ; born of carnal ingenuity, to make its prey of spiritual simplicity. The author has had in view the victims, not the champions of this new scheme. Whatever has been written is intended for a shield and not a sword : a cry from the watch-tower, not a challenge to the field. Nevertheless, it is not for him that girdeth on his armour, to boast himself as he that putteth it off. He needs a sure footing and a firm one, who determines to move, or even to stand against a tide that has suddenly turned upon him, and is bearing back whatever he might lay hold of for support, whatever he has heretofore relied upon for encouragement. Among those for whom this work is intended, and by whom it will be read, the writer expects that it will be by many disputed and condemned. But will it be disproved ?

Evangelical religion *has been the fashion* : the tide is turned ; and much that had floated forward on its surface, is now floating backward whither it set out. Many that called themselves evangelical, and seemed to delight in the truth that is so designated, have now disowned the word, and grown, at the least, indifferent to the doctrine. There is every ap-

pearance that the world will get back its own—some landed and some wrecked upon its familiar shores, where they will find themselves, alas! how much at home!

Fast fixed, meantime, upon the Rock of ages, the Church of Christ remains: firm, immutable, and separate as ever: she has not neared the world; and however in calm times the world has poured its multitudes upon her borders, the distance is ever and exactly what it was. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “The flesh warreth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” They who have built their house upon that Rock, will be as surely found upon it, when the current turns, as when the floating multitude came in upon them; for what was but a fashion of the times to others, is life and peace to them. Of those whom we now see departing from us, we believe and are assured that we shall see many back: but with what loss returning!

The author has felt it no small discouragement in her task, to have some in mind while she indites these pages, who were used to welcome what they will not now; to expect a con-

flict where she would once have found acceptance; and feel that she is, not leaving, but left by those with whom she was used to walk together in the truth of Jesus. May her words but reach however few, of those who, gone as they are upon the turning stream, are not yet out of hearing, and be by heaven blessed to their recal, and she will be amply satisfied, whatever else ensue. She feels not confident, of even so much as this: for her voice is too feeble for the greatness of the evil. She was urgently called upon to appear on the Lord's side: the only unshaken confidence she feels in putting forth these pages, is, that what she has written, *is on the Lord's side*: the rest is in His hands.

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THE LISTENER IN OXFORD.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Was I wrong when I said to you, that some things should be rejected without examination? Is it indeed a universal obligation, to condemn nothing unheard? Consider of it.

Life is not long enough, nor the ordinary powers of man capacious enough, neither are means and opportunities afforded us, to examine all that we must either receive as true, or reject as false; approve as right, or reprobate as wrong. In the common concerns of life, we both think and act continually upon unexamined testimony, and one who should refuse to do so, would be presently pro-

nounced insane. In religion, think what would be the consequence to the young, the susceptible, the inexperienced, if every fancy-begotten novelty, or time-engendered corruption, were to become the subject of mental contemplation and enquiry. Did you ever waste your time and pollute your mind with the pages of Socinus, of Rousseau, or Paine, lest you should condemn Socinianism, infidelity, and immorality without a hearing? Some have done so: in the pride of their intellect and the rashness of their curiosity, some have fallen into this insidious snare. I have very recently known a young person, of excellent talents and good promise in religion, though vacillating and impressible: at the instigation of a too venturous mother, living in Roman Catholic society abroad, her first step was to study their religion closely, in order to talk well: her last step was to the delusion of popery, and the degradation of a convent.

Believe me, it is no uncommon process, and I fear no rare result. A very large proportion of those who make shipwreck of their faith, whether in doctrine or practice, have begun with the indulgence of an ungodly curiosity; to hear what others are saying,

to see what others are doing, to try for themselves whether error be error or sin be sin, or either be as hurtful as it is said to be. I have seen the first steps of many such experimenters in religion, always assured that they were only going to examine before they condemned; and I see them still, fallen from truth if not from grace, wandering farther and farther in the maze of error, or wearily trying to retrace their steps. They are where the mariner would be, if one could be found so mad, who, despising the chart by which others sail securely, and reach the port in safety, should choose to find out for himself where the rocks and quicksands lay, and whither the tides would bear him: veering and tossing upon a trackless sea, "carried about with every wind of doctrine," or, left a wreck upon some lonely shore: "concerning faith have made shipwreck."

I anticipate an objection, that Popery and Socinianism and Infidelity are things well understood; and of which you are sufficiently informed, to be justified in rejecting them without investigation: whereas the views now pressed upon your curiosity are new, they are brought forward by men of character, and have been extensively received. I will not ask now,

since without study you attained satisfaction in the older things, if you might not by as safe a process satisfy yourself with respect to these new ones: but I will rather say, the very fact of their being new, is a first reason to avoid them. The religion of Christ is not new; it has been unchanged from the beginning; it has never had so much as a new dress, except of man's devising, speedily worn out, and put away. The path of life is not a new one; it was made at first too straight to admit of deviation, except by leaving it. The entrance gate has never been but one,—“I am the door,”—and he who entered otherwise has been treated as a robber. The way-mark on it has never been removed, and the lamp that illumines it is not removeable; it has seemed to burn brighter or dimmer, as man has at times prevailed to deaden or to trim it: but man has no new light to cast upon the heavenward track, nor can take with him into new ways the light of God.

Every attempt at change, or pretension to novelty, is a just ground of suspicion, and should induce to caution, till time has tried pretensions apparently so arrogant and high-minded. When the champion of a new system

comes out from the body of Christ's people, if he be of them, or draws near to their borders, if he be from without, to make proclamation of his own superiority, the onus lies with him to shew proofs of his commission from on high: and whether the Goliath be a Southcote, an Irving, or a Pusey, the Israel of God, both pastors and people, had better, I think, bide within their tents, and guard their lines, while some David, if it be necessary, tries the strength of the challenger. For the most part, such a one has never tried his own. A life of devotedness and communing with heaven, years of anxious careful investigation, days of thoughtfulness and nights of prayer, have not been his preparation for the bold encounter. He comes with sword and shield, embossed with the honours of a college, or burnished with the applause of a congregation,—young in religion, and mostly young in years,—a babe in Christ, if not of his Spirit unborn. Fresh from his school of poetry, or popularity, or secular learning, or mere table talk, he comes to disturb the church of God, and break the peace of Israel, with some new scheme of faith—as new to himself as to them—for he never thought of it, or heard of

it till yesterday. I am not thus speaking of things that I know not. It has been my lot to be present at the very birth-time of things like these. If allowed to deal with them alone, any experienced, single-minded child of God, with a sling and stone, would lay these untried champions in the dust. But the enemy of peace has laid his plans—and on the first sounding of the trumpet, forth comes the curious multitude to see. The malignant imitator of Jehovah's works, knows well how to sow *his* grain of mustard-seed on a soil where it will grow up, and put forth great branches, until the fowls of the air come to lodge under its shadow. It is nothing to him that there the imitation ends; and that while the seed of Jehovah's planting grows on to eternity, a season will wither his, and prove that it had no root. It has served his purpose meantime, and he can sow again. The field is wide, and the soil, alas! too rife of reproduction. It is a remarkable fact that the same persons who run first and farthest into one new scheme, are the individuals who most eagerly adopt the next, though it should be the very opposite extreme of doctrine and discipline. Those who remember the ultra-calvinistic secession of twenty years ago, will find no few of

its best known champions now in the ranks of Irvingism; and if some such names be not yet registered for the Popish lists at Oxford, there are signs of the times; and we shall see hands that once could not offer the bread of life to any but the pre-elect of God, and now locate the Holy Spirit's work within the pale of Newman Street, presently become prodigal of both, in the waters of baptism, and episcopal ordination. Already "the fowls of the air" that hovered for a season round the outermost branches of the one fast withering root, are seen gathering about the fresher promise of the new one. Surely it is strange—that men do not remember—that they cannot learn; that shepherds who so lately by their own venturous approaches to the precipice, led their flocks headlong over it, and lost them, are doing the same again. Would that we could say to some we know, albeit such as we have little right to teach, and little hope that they will read our pages, 'Do you not remember, in such a place and at such a time, how you countenanced and helped forward, and for a season followed, not knowing to what extremes they meant to go, those mischief-doers, whom with all your souls you now condemn? How by metaphysical dis-

tinctions, and verbal perversions, and useless disputations, by misusing common words, and puzzling plain texts, and dissecting hidden mysteries, you confused the simple, and unsettled the weak, and excited the curious? We might meet you not unjustly with the words of David's brethren—"Where have you left those few poor sheep in the wilderness?" You are on the field again—you have not separated *yourselves* from the worship of your fathers—you have not made schisms in *your own* household, and cast off the friends of your bosom, and set a mark upon your name, and excluded yourselves from all rational society. You played with weapons of which you knew the use too well to slay yourselves. You have changed your minds, and retracted your opinions, or withdrawn them silently without a disavowal. But where are those little ones, whom you seduced from their more sober teachers, and fed on stimulants, till neither they nor you could any more satisfy them with the bread of truth? I have seen a mother put a drop of spirits on her infant's lips—and I have seen the first dose administered of other intoxications; the issue was not contemplated in either case, but it might have been.

We might ask you—we do ask you—Where are our children, our bosom friends, our sisters, with whom we sometimes took sweet counsel together, brake bread at the same table, and worshipped in the same place—but who now live in suspicious and repulsive silence? We miss them, if you do not; and we remember who it was that led them first aside from the paths of simplicity and godly quietness. Love keeps a surer register than conscience. We could tell you, perhaps, from which of your sermons, which of your rash and ill-considered statements, the first false impression came. But you have forgotten all. I know it will be pleaded that as honest and zealous men, such persons teach only what they believe to be the truth; and by reason of human fallibility, finding themselves to have been mistaken, they cannot do more than to confess their errors, and follow the increased light that has been granted them. Yes, they can do more, and more is required of them to do by God and man. They might learn humility by their previous miscarriages, and go softly in remembrance of the mischief they have done. They might lay their finger on their lips, and keep silence from all novelties and notions of their own henceforward. They

might mistrust themselves, and expect to be mistrusted, and put a careful guard upon their statements. I think they should forbear to lead, and be the last to follow in any deviation from the beaten track. I am sure they should not be, as they are, the heroes of the next onslaught.

The fact is otherwise. The same men, who by their expectation of miraculous gifts, their exact calculations of the Lord's immediate coming,—and above all, their bold investigation of his sinless humanity, laid the foundation for Irvingism in many a guileless bosom, and shaped and fitted many a fair stone for the building of a temple, to which they never joined themselves, unhumiliated and unashamed, are repeating the experiment; and with their matins and their vespers, their turnings and bowings, their Romish phraseology and pontifical pretensions, their wilful obscuration, to say the least, of the first principles of the Protestant faith, are promoting the views of the new school at Oxford, which, nevertheless, they do not intend to join; betraying into its hands the flocks committed to their care, and the younger ministry emboldened by their example: to end, as it will end to hundreds, not themselves, in all the mental debasement and

spiritual delusions of a modernized popery. The question forces itself upon me: are these the representatives of Him who carried the lambs in his bosom, and gently led the sick and feeble of the flock? I cannot speak to this, but I know that in the same place where it is written, "Blessed are they that turn many to righteousness, they shall shine as the stars of heaven"—it is written again, "I would that they were even cut off that trouble you."

The claim upon our attention so often urged, on the ground that the first advocates of a new party are holy men, would, I think, be invalid, if it were true. I cannot speak personally of the present men,—for I do not know them; but I do know how far from holiness such leaders usually are: how arrogant, how restless, how insubmissive and disorderly, how confident and boastful of themselves, how irascible and impatient of contradiction.

But *holy* is a great and sacred word. It is the likeness of him who is essentially the Holy One; of him, who in the days of his humiliation, claimed it for himself: "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One," &c., and as his own, conferred it upon his people, to be the name and distinction of his redeemed. "And they

shall call them the holy people. the redeemed of the Lord." Isa. lii. 12. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Doubtless, the most holy among men would be the fittest, if we knew them, to be our counsellors and our example, as likeliest to know the mind of God in all things. But we must not confound the things that differ. He, and he only, is the holiest man, who is the nearest to God, and the likest to Christ, and the best instructed of the Holy Ghost: of whom it can be most truly said, that "the life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God:" for it is only through the truth,— "Sanctify them through the truth, thy word is truth,"—that Jesus imparts to his people the likeness of his sanctification. Much must be known before this new name can be read upon the brow, the seal of the Spirit upon the servants of God: "The new man, created of God unto righteousness and true holiness," or as the margin reads, "the holiness of truth." Ephes. iv. 24.

I decline therefore to say, if these be holy men. They are men of spotless character and blameless lives: so was Paul of Tarsus, when he made havoc of the church of Christ. They

are men of amiable and endearing dispositions: so was he who refused to follow Christ. They are of good reputation in the learning and wisdom of this world: not many such are called. It is said, they are of great exactness in fasting and in praying often: there were some such heretofore, who were not justified: and they practise great austerity and self-denial: "but though they should give their bodies to be burned, and have not charity, it should profit them nothing." If any, or all of these things together can prove a special commission from on high, or a peculiar intimacy with the mind of God, we must not stop to learn at Oxford: we must study divinity in the cells of the anchorite, in the tortures of La Trappe, or the devotions of Lough Dearg.

Satan works not with feeble and inefficient tools. The leaders of every successful schism and scheme of separation in the church, have been men of good character, of adequate talents, and popular manners; none other would succeed: and they have generally been men who for the attainment of their objects, or in the honest exaltation of their zeal, have drawn the eyes of the world upon themselves, by extraordinary demonstrations of self-sacrifice and

devotedness. But this is beside the purpose : the tree is judged by its fruits, the workman by his works, the minister by his ministration ; we cannot reverse this order. “ If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine,”—what says the apostle,—ask who he is, inquire of his character, consider his talents, his learning, his apparent sincerity? Such is not the apostolic direction. “ Receive him not into your house ;” or as it is elsewhere written, “ Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed.”

Not less invalid, by all past experience, is the claim upon our attention deduced from the numbers that are flocking round the banners of this new party. It has always been so. There is no absurdity or extravagance of human invention, but has found more willing acceptance, and more true believers than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not a Baal, nor an Ashtaroth, but has had more ardent worshippers than the crucified Redeemer. Did success confer truth upon the Mahometan crescent or the Romish crozier? Forty thousand persons admitted the pretensions of Johanna Southcote ; and I am informed that the greater part

of those who survive believe them still. The process of proselytism is very simple, and I suppose it is the same at all times, except to the true faith of Christ. That the greatness of the power may be of God, and not of man, it has pleased the Most High to make his own holy faith, the only one that can make no converts without his accompanying Spirit. "The world will love its own." All inventions and perversions of religion, all dressings and disguisings of the truth, have more or less in them that is acceptable to man, because it comes of man, and falls in with the tastes and tendencies of the natural heart. The religion of Jesus only, in its purity and simplicity, coming entire from God, is wholly adverse to our fallen nature. "I come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The justness and verity of our blessed Lord's appeal is constantly exhibited. The profane philosopher has presumed upon it to assert that Christianity is a failure; the unreflecting are shaken and embarrassed by the result. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Observe the devoted minister of Christ, toiling year after year among a careless and ungodly

people; slowly and painfully he sows his seed, and long and wearily he waits to see it grow; till some few solitary saints among a stony-hearted multitude become the crown of his rejoicing. But comes there into the field of his patient, prayerful labours, a preacher of new things, an Irvingite, a Puseyite, no matter what, so it be new enough, and strange enough, and wrong enough; he will have more adherents in a month than the tried and sober preacher gained in years; it will be well if he pick not the precious jewels from his hard-won crown, to lose them once more in the dust of earth. It is then the doubtful falter, the weak are discouraged, and the children of light are grieved and saddened in their heavenward course, scarce knowing what to think. Yet the word of God has said that so it will be. "Who hath believed our report?" "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" And a sound philosophy might expect no otherwise. For while some modes of religion indulge the pride of man, and some his earthliness, and some his sin, all suffer him to be something, except the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, which demands that he should be nothing, have nothing, do nothing. "They are of the world, therefore speak they

of the world, and the world heareth them." Every false religion and every modification of Christianity, to the extent in which it is erroneous, being the product of the human mind, is brought by that very circumstance within the compass of the human understanding, and adapted to the feelings of the human heart. What pride engenders, pride cherishes and fosters; what imagination gives birth to, imagination loves. Whatever comes of this world's wisdom, intellect, and learning, the earthly nature can appreciate and delight in; as too surely the corrupted nature can delight itself in corruption. Every faculty as it were recognizes and embraces its own offspring in the productions of another mind. The purity, the simplicity, the lowliness, the spirituality of Christ's religion alone can find no parentage, and no welcome in the unregenerate heart; for it was born in heaven, and comes not of man, neither of the will of man; and the more unmixed and undisguised it is with adventitious adjuncts of forms and ceremonies and secular distinctions, the less congenial is it to the nature it is to act upon. Thus while every other form of faith can make its own way in the Eternal Spirit's despite, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Then there is

that mighty unseen agency, of whose power, I believe, we have no adequate conception, in deadly opposition always to the unmixed truth, but concurrent, if not dominant in every adulteration and perversion of it; calculated as all such movements are, to promote his aims in the destruction of the Church, and the turning aside of the simple from the paths of righteousness and peace.

Surely, then, success should be no test of truth. In all but that which needs a change of heart, proselytism is a simple process. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Man without God is not at rest. Independence, the boast of the lawless, and the ambition of the proud, is a condition of which created essence is incapable. Estranged from his Creator, and refusing to retain God in his knowledge, man cannot rid himself of this necessity of his being; the source, I apprehend, of all idolatry,—gross, irrational, and degrading as it is. Man can better trust a reptile or a stone, than do without a God: can rather commit his destiny to the planets, than manage it himself. As deep, as irradicable in every human bosom is the infixed consciousness of an hereafter. It may be mastered by unbelief, or overborne

by the interests of time and sense,—but it is there: and like the buried fires of Etna, around whose base, emboldened by time and indifferent by habit, men build and live upon the very wreck of previous desolations,—the disowned truth remains. There are stirring moments, when the boldest heart will quake at the distant rumbling of eternal thunders; and he who has no good hope of a blissful futurity, and no desires beyond the present world, has a something yet within him, from which he needs relief,—needs the refuge of religion; equally, whether he have none, or whether he professes a faith, by the unfulfilled requirements of which he stands condemned, or to its unbelieved promises is afraid to trust himself,—a creed by which, if it be true, he is not saved, but lost. “The unrighteous are as the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.” To such, and there are many such in every Christian country, whose consciences are disturbed, but not satisfied; who have just faith enough to know the want of more; the raising of any new standard is a promise of victory round which they will rally for a season, in hope to achieve the object, rather of their necessities than their wishes,—an assurance of salvation.

Some few excepted,—the most painfully conspicuous in all such movements, who seem possessed by nature with a morbid incapacity of rest—to whom neither time, nor suffering, nor knowledge, nor experience, can give stability,—on whom, I do believe the Lord that bought them looks with compassionating patience, as struggling with some great and strange infirmity:—these few erratic spirits excepted,—among the crowd that gives consequence to new schemes, you will not find the tried, the experienced, or the aged Christian; such as through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, have kept their footing on the rock of ages, have fought the good fight of faith, and are waiting in hope the near approach of glory; men who have made proof of their ministry through years of useful labour, and proof of their faith through fires seven times heated; and proof of their high calling in Christ Jesus through a long course of obedience and detachment from the world.

Ministers of religion indeed there are; in the present case we learn with grief how many,—but with the exceptions already named, they are mostly the younger clergy. To the young

soldier on his first battle-field, the thirst for distinction is very powerful; desperate adventures have a spirit-stirring charm: men are alike,—and ministers are men. I know less of the present movement party, than I have done of former ones: but I believe its victims will be much the same. It will meet the newborn spirit's first cry for sustenance, and stay its longings with unwholesome food. It will hail the desolate and benighted in their restless wanderings, and give them shelter under a baseless roof. It will find the conscience-stricken sinner writhing under the terrors of the Almighty, and put his fears to sleep upon a false dependence. To the worldly, the vacillating, the inconsistent, it will offer salvation upon pleasanter terms than those they hesitate to close with: to all, with the supply the soul demands, a something will be mixed that nature loves: a pearl of price, without parting from all they have, to purchase it. They may keep their good works, their pleasures, or their pride; their self-righteous pretensions or unrighteous habits. Instead, therefore, of success giving a claim to our attention, I think it should rather be our warning. We watch the increasing epidemy with increasing fears, and as

numbers fall, we double our precautions; remove our families, avoid communication, attend to our state of health, and medicate the slightest symptom of disease. We do not—seeing how mad we are in greater risks, it is almost a wonder that we do not—flock to the infected region, and crowd the hospitals to indulge our curiosity about the prevalent disease, and learn how to treat it when it approaches. I have been told that some parents have removed their sons from Oxford, on account of the epidemy there. I know not if it is so, and I know not who they are; but if it be true, I think God has endowed those parents with no common wisdom.

I have already spoken less strongly than I feel it, of some who precipitate their hearers into every covert snare of error and disorder. I doubt if even they do well, who in defence of truth awaken the curiosity of the simple, and stimulate the appetites of the curious, by introducing them to a controversy they might otherwise escape. But I am sure they do not well, who being by their position not called upon to controvert, or by their endowments not fitted for it, are persuaded to try the stability of their own faith, against seductive

novelties, backed by the influence of the powers of darkness.

Oh ! believe me, it is a bold and graceless thing, to go unbidden of God into the fields of disputation, and tread presumptuously the maze of error. Think of it when next you say this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation ;" and pause upon the thought, and wait intent upon the Spirit's guidance, before you venture even upon enquiry. Jesus set you no example of such boldness. He did not go to meet the tempter in the wilderness, till the Spirit took him there,—and used no other arms to foil him with, than the written word of God. Jesus gives you no encouragement,—“If they shall say, lo here, or lo there, go not after them.”

LETTER II.

ANTIQUITY AND TRADITION.

MUSING upon some legendary tale, has your fancy never lighted upon the poor pilgrim, at the first vision of his place of rest, the hallowed tower or consecrated dome, beneath which lies buried the object of his adoration : for which he left the pleasures of his home, and for its sake forgot them ; for which he travelled long and weary miles, and had not known that they were long and weary ? His limbs just failing, his heart just sinking, his little store just emptied ; have you not fancied him sitting down at night-fall, in sight of the object of such intense desire—the last of many and many a houseless night, to sleep in peace, unless he wake for joy, waiting the longed-for morning, the end and recompence of all his toils ? What think you such a one would do, if some should tell

him he had lost his way,—the treasure was not there? If those before him should come crowding back, and from a nearer view pronounce themselves mistaken; and those about him and behind him start aside, some one way, some another, in search of the right road? What would our poor pilgrim do, with his spent powers, and emptied scrip, and numbered days? He would do, my friend, what we do, and what I counsel you to do: he would turn neither to the right hand nor to the left; neither ask nor listen; he would draw from his bosom the chart by which he travelled, and examine anew the directions he had received; anew compare them with the way that he had come, and with the scene that lay disclosed before him. “As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.” “Walk about Zion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following.”

Strangers and pilgrims upon earth, some sick, some weary, all waiting for our rest; it is no matter of indifference to us, whoever we may be, or wherever halting on our heavenward course, that the powers of darkness should

thus prevail to cross the path of life. Our ears are vexed, and our hearts are broken, as one upon another, like the messengers of Job, the evil reporters come, each to take something that the other left us; to dispute some precious truth, to deny some trusted promise, to wrench away, as it were, another and another stone from out the sure foundation of our faith. We would fain be deaf, that we might not hear, and blind that we might not see, where the sheep of the Lord's pasture lie scattered and peeled, and the Shepherd of Israel exhibits, as it were afresh, the wounds with which he is wounded in the house of his friends.

There is but one thing left for us to do. Satan has come again to appear before the Lord. Job ii. The accuser of the brethren has impleaded against us, before our Father in heaven, and challenged him to withdraw from us all external help. He has charged us, perhaps too truly, with building our faith upon each other, and leaning upon each other for support, gaining courage from our numbers, and zeal from our fellowship. I could fancy he has said, 'Put forth thine hand now, and take away their external advantages; break up their religious associations, silence their gospel

preachers, throw into confusion their reading, their talking and expounding, and leave them alone with thy Spirit and thy word, and see what will come of the religion of the age.' God has taken the Tempter at his word; He has suffered him to turn our communion into gall and bitterness; our religious tracts and pamphlets into poison; our commentaries into corruptions, and our pulpits into snares; and if his present machination should succeed, our true scriptural church into no better than an idol's fane. May grace be given us to abide the test, and hold fast the profession of our faith, and in the loss of all external opportunities and encouragements, to say with holy Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." There is but one thing left for us to do. We must cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and confine ourselves to the teaching of the Written Word. It is this that I entreat of you to do, whenever these new things are forced upon your attention. Do not first give them entertainment, and suffer your mind to be imbued with their doctrines, and familiarized with their phraseology, and afterwards search the Scriptures for the purpose of confirming

already received opinions. It is a wilderness indeed, through which they will lead you, before you reach that precious land of promise. From their own obscure, and I think purposely equivocal statements, wishing to imply more than they think it discreet to say, or perhaps wishing to say more than they are quite sure that they believe, these theologians will send you to dig the earth for light, and seek truth beneath the accumulated dust of ages. The Church, they say, has grown too young of late, and must revert to the beginning for experience; to the day-dawning for a clearer vision. They will commend you to antiquity, or something that they call so: to the apostolic age, but not to the Apostles: to where the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings, but not to that blessed and eternal Sun. Then they will change their minds—and they are right, for the apostolic ages will not serve their purpose: the reflex image of that Sun was too distinct in those who so nearly beheld its rising beauty. They find antiquity now wants experience, and you must travel two or three centuries forward to look for its maturity. This is no jest; it is their own plain statement. Neither they who, under the teaching of the Incarnate

Word, drank of the waters at the fountain-head ; nor they who under the dispensation of the Spirit, have come near to the out-breaking of the perfect day, will serve the purpose of the Prince of darkness. He who sowed tares in the Redeemer's field, best knows how long they were coming to maturity, and when they overgrew and smothered the good seed : the very point of time at which the gospel, once preached to the poor, and adapted to the unlearned, and welcomed by the simple, was most completely hidden from those for whom it was intended, beneath the mass of error, prejudice, and superstition, with which even in the apostle's days it began to be encumbered. It is to that very point of time they will send you, but not to learn the lesson that you might learn in the study of those pious Fathers ; deepest gratitude to God, that by extended possession and understanding of the Scriptures, knowledge has been added to our faith, and the truth been again disencumbered of the fables and commandments of men, with which some of the most righteous and devoted of other days possessed it.

It is the character of all human achievements to advance progressively to a certain point, and then recede and fall into decay.

Every kingdom of this world has thus risen and thus fallen; and every church of this world, as regards what was human in it, its external form and polity, has risen and fallen in like manner. Not so the works of God. In all that He does there is progression, but no receding. There is no instance of divine working within human observation, in which the Almighty has not wrought progressively—taken time to bring his purpose to perfection, and gradually developed his design. But as the creating hand of Deity did probably never annihilate one material atom it had pleased Him to produce, however often he has changed its form, developing powers and properties, at first undiscernible—so I believe the immutable mind of deity did never alter one letter of his law, or dictate of his will: from time to time He had added to the revelation of himself, but never withdrawn it—never obscured it—never contradicted it. In the disclosure and accomplishment of his plan of redemption, He has made use of human means and human instruments; but He has used them without changing their sublunary characters of instability and decay; or adapting to their changes his own unchanging purpose. While the kingdoms of

this world have been rising and falling, the kingdom of Christ has been gradually established upon the foundation of Moses and the prophets, or rather on that one foundation-stone first laid in Paradise; a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. So also the churches of this world, ordained of God himself, accompanied by his blessing, and made use of by his Spirit, preserving their character of human institutions still, have successively corrupted themselves, and fallen away, and God has let them go—doubtless that man's perishable workmanship may never be confounded with his own. Thus to our limited observance, there have been dark times and light times, and dark places and light places. But on the Church of Christ throughout, I believe the light has been gradually increasing, and his love unfolding, and his final purposes unclosing; and at no previous period has a child of God had the means of knowing so much of the mind of God as at the present time. I speak not of external churches, national or congregational. There may be some, albeit owned of God, whose candle has nigh out-burned itself, as there are some where it has gone out long since. But I think that a dis-

principle of Christ in the present day, with the Bible in his hand, and the Holy Spirit in his heart, can know more, and if unclouded by human intervention, does know more of revealed truth than the disciple of any former period. If we would study antiquity, we must seek it, not amid the ruins of fallen churches, that fell because they were corrupt, and are in ruins because God has done with them; but in the antiquity of Jehovah's eternal purpose; "The hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory." 1 Cor. ii. 7. "The revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Rom. xvi. 25.

God the Father has never had but two witnesses upon earth—the Word and the Spirit. From the beginning they have worked together in the revelation and accomplishment of his designs. All human instrumentality has been but as the workman's tools, of which he takes up one and lays down another, as they may serve the occasion, and replaces them with new ones when he has worn them out. It is most

truly worth our while to go back to the remotest records of His ways, to see how wisely, how uniformly, how systematically,—if I may so speak,—the Triune Power has performed his work, and built himself a spiritual temple upon earth, with instrumentalities so feeble and impermanent: but we can scarcely admire the wisdom of those who desire that the master-builder should bring back to the finishing and polishing of his edifice in these last days, the tools with which he hewed and quarried the first foundation-stones. The earliest communication from God to man, was by the word spoken. The primitive saints received the revelation of his will direct from heaven, by personal communication; that is, by something, whether sight or sound, submitted to their senses—I apprehend by actual converse with God, in the person of the Son, carried on in human language, as it is verbally transmitted to us; and incapable therefore of misconception or delusion in those who received it: or otherwise by dreams and visions of the night, of which the interpretation was given by the Spirit together with the vision; leaving no doubt of its meaning in the mind of the recipient. It is manifest that Abraham and

other patriarchal saints, knew the heavenly messengers when they saw them, and were too much accustomed to the sight to express any surprise when they appeared. From them the divine communication passed by tradition to their descendants; and this may truly be considered the traditionary dispensation—the first simple machinery employed to make known to the infant church, the will of the Almighty. It was then sufficient. Three generations, that is to say, three individuals, were sufficient, at the then age of man, to transmit the word spoken throughout two thousand years—from Adam to Isaac; these individuals also, being the heads, the single heads of the family and church of God on earth: wearing out whole centuries in the midst of their undispersed posterity; their children's children, brought up upon their knees, received the sure tradition of what had passed between themselves and God. There needs but little understanding to perceive that this instrumentality would not serve its purpose as the world increased, and the duration of life was shortened, and families separated, and the powers of communication were rendered more difficult and uncertain by the confusion of languages. The

Almighty had a new and more perfect machinery in preparation, even for the dark dispensation of the law. Yet it is this instrumentality of traditionary lore, the wise ones of our day would have again, to illuminate the written word; the elementary teaching of the Church's infancy, to help its adult studies; or rather,—for patriarchal transmission they cannot have,—the confused testimony and uncertain recollection of ages and generations of traditionary interpreters, of distant nations and of different tongues, to throw light upon the teaching of the Spirit and the word; really to do what has been done before;—how like is human workmanship throughout—to “make the law of God of none effect by their traditions.”

Gradually,—for in the working of Almighty power, we observe no such thing as abrupt and sudden change,—a set of men were taken out of the body of the Church, to receive the communications of the Word and of the Spirit, to convey them to those whom they immediately concerned, and transmit them in writing to the Church for ever. The visits of angelic messengers became gradually more rare, preparatory to their cessation altogether, after the appearance of the Incarnate Word, and the gift of the

Holy Spirit to the Churches. Seers and prophets became, meantime, the intermediate instruments; tradition was entirely superseded; for even that which had been previously intrusted to it, was taken out of its keeping by Moses, to be made an integral part of Holy Writ.

The striking, the impressive, the almost awful instrumentality made use of to disseminate the word during the Jewish dispensation, must often have filled our minds with curiosity and wonder. The prophets, or men of God, as they were called, come so suddenly and abruptly on the scene, attest their mission by such mysterious actions and impressive signs, deliver their divine message with such supernatural authority; and then, to the extent of our information respecting them, so abruptly disappear, that we can scarcely realize them as beings of the earth; and whether their errands were of wrath or mercy—whether it were the Tishbite in the field of Naboth, the son of Imlah in the royal council-chamber, or the mysterious Ezekiel setting his face against the mountains, the vallies, and the streams—we behold the chosen emissaries of the word, distinct and separate from all other

beings, speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and we feel assured that they spoke nothing of their own, and nothing that they heard from other men; but simply and verbally that which they received by direct communication from on high. We see not why the prophet of Bethel incurred so severe a condemnation, if not because he chose to receive at second-hand the commands it was his privilege to receive direct from heaven, and modified the word of God by the words of another prophet. Certain we are, that these holy prophets and seers had actual vision and intercourse with the eternal God, the revelation of whose will they were to carry forward, and make known to the Church by the Holy Scriptures: and I believe it will be found that none other than those who had such intercourse, have ever been authorized to communicate as of divine authority, any revelation of the will of God to man.

A considerable time before the Word became incarnate, the scriptures of the Old Testament being completed, the Jewish church given over to corruptions, and the older things making ready to pass away, the instrumentality of these inspired messengers was withdrawn; and the

believing Jews were left, as far as we know, to the instruction of the written word, and the expectation of the Messiah, who, when he came, should teach them all things.

Again we remark, how the Prince of Darkness, and they whose eyes he has blinded, loving darkness rather than light, have betaken themselves to this apocryphal period for their faith, in preference to the witness of the Spirit and the word; and built their faith upon it, to the destruction of a once accepted church. It is impossible not to compare like things with like, and tremble for the consequences of a similar preference, should the present scheme obtain amongst us, to take the testimony of the Fathers in the stead of that of the Scriptures, and maintain upon their authority what cannot be proved upon the authority of the Bible. "So did your fathers to the false prophets;" so did the Church of Rome, when she embodied the apocryphal writings in the canon of Scripture. And they did it for exactly the same reason that our Oxford theologians betake themselves to the writings of the fathers; because they wish to establish a divine power and authority in the opinions of something that they call "The Church," which they cannot substantiate

upon the Bible only ; they propagate doctrines that are not written therein, and find it impossible, as their Romish predecessors did, to make their story good without some other revelation of the mind of God, than the pure unmingled Scriptures,—Alas for them ! no longer in the safe keeping of the dead languages. This is the sheet-anchor of our hopes. We see what they are doing ; but they have harder work than Rome had : the Holy Book is now in every hand, and in every tongue. Be it read in the ears of the people in every corner of our land ! We have no other defence against this hydra-headed antichrist.

With deepest gratitude and intensest wonder we come to contemplate the rising of the Sun of Righteousness ; the period in which God, “ who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.” While the mind of God, and the purpose of God, and the whole scheme of human redemption remained the same, the method of the dispensation was entirely changed ; there was to be a New Testament, a new covenant, a new tabernacle, a new and living way. “ And in that he saith a new, he hath made the first old ;

now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away," as all human instrumentality has done and will do: until the body of Christ being perfected, and the work of redemption done, this impermanent world itself shall pass away, and a new heaven and a new earth be created. The whole machinery of the Jewish dispensation was dispensed with; but not suddenly; not abruptly. The Jewish policy had been the contrivance of eternal wisdom: and though when men had corrupted them, and He had done with them, He calls those institutions carnal ordinances, and a worldly sanctuary; the God of Abraham had not always held them so; they had been the ordinances in which He was to be known, and the sanctuary in which his glory dwelt. The Son of Man, who came to fulfil all righteousness, even that which pertained to the ceremonial law, was to fulfil the first covenant before he brought in the second, and put honour on the Mosaic law by his obedience, before he abrogated it, and freed his people from its onerous yoke; that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which saith, "Not one jot or one tittle of my law shall pass away, till all be fulfilled." Have we not justly said, that there was no change in God's purposes, no

recession in his work, no retrograde movement in the manifestation of his truth, or pause in the perfecting of his design; however the instruments with which he wrought were successively worn out and put aside.

Under the New Testament, the mode of divine communication was again gradually, not abruptly changed. Throughout the ministration of Christ and his apostles, the sanction of miraculous power was continued: and till the same period, though the Spirit had left them, the ordinances of the Jewish ritual were suffered to remain. The written word had yet to be completed, and men were enabled to write it as before, by actual intercourse with God, and direct communication from the Holy Ghost. "The Word was made flesh:" the apostles beheld the source of light and truth, and received the word from his own lips, and the Spirit from his own hands, and were thus enabled to complete what seers and prophets had begun. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which

was with the Father, and was manifest unto us : that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." With them the Revelation ended. The purpose was accomplished ; no man afterwards had personal intercourse with God, and I repeat my belief that no one who has not, has ever been entitled to make communications as of divine authority. We do not suppose that Timothy or Titus had any open vision : and no words of Timothy or Titus are handed down to us as parts of Holy Writ. Had there been other revelations, there would have been other Scriptures : and had there been anything more necessary for the Church to know, it would have been added thereto. I speak affirmatively, because I feel it impossible it should be otherwise. It would be contrary to the whole analogy of God's dealings with mankind, a recession in the manner of his working, an anomaly in his plans. Is it likely, is it possible, is it in common sense to say, or to suppose, that he who with reduplicated types and shadows, with appalling signs and supernatural wonders, and finally, by the incarnation of the Son, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, had made sure at every step the revelation of himself,

should have left something in charge at last to the traditional practice, and confused recollection, and corrupt affection of an apostolic priesthood; without a written document, a sealed commission, a single voucher for their authority, except their own assertions? The poorest possession of this perishable world would not pass by such an entail: and yet we are invited to trust to it the salvation of our souls; and to believe that God has trusted to it the revelation of his will!

How unlike to the beautiful economy of the divine procedure. St. John, the latest survivor of the inspired apostles, who had held communion with the Son of God, and received from him powers which the laying on of no mere human hand could impart or perpetuate, having finished the Revelation which Moses had begun, the Father closed his book, and sealed it with a blessing and a curse. Blessed for ever are they that read and they that hear; cursed for ever are they that add to or take from the words of that sacred volume. The types and shadows were fulfilled, the Jewish polity was overthrown, the open vision had ceased; miraculous signs and wonders were dispensed with; the ministration of angels, the agency of devils, and the influences

of the Holy Spirit, all once submitted to the outward sense, became all at the same time mental and invisible: and however manifest to the consciousness of the recipient, can no longer be submitted to observation or to proof, except in their effects. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

Thus, when all was ready, the spiritual dispensation of the Gospel was established, and the Church was left to the sure witness of the written Word, and the testimony of the Spirit within the soul of man. We want no more, and we can have no more. The Church has reached its manhood; its emblems and picture-books are put away; its nursing angels and inspired tutors are dismissed; it is brought as it were to the instruction and the companionship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." "He shall give you another comforter, who shall abide with you for ever." "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The veil of the temple has been rent in twain. There is no longer a secret place of the Almighty; open to the priest, and closed against the people;

there is no longer an intermediate between the soul of the believer and the Triune God, the three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; Christ is the only mediator of the new covenant, the Holy Spirit is his only interpreter upon earth.

“ By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” Under this purer, this higher, this more spiritual method of instruction, the church of God is destined to grow in knowledge and understanding of the truth, until that final manifestation, “ when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things.” Shame on the imbecile and childish minds that would not have it so, and are crying aloud for their school-books back again! “ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” “ The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors until the

time appointed of the father: even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But they who received the adoption, (for this was addressed to Christian converts,) did not like their father's house; and they who, under the law as a schoolmaster, had been shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed, did not like their emancipation when it came, and desired again to be in bondage to the 'weak and beggarly elements;' mark the expression well, for it contains a lesson and warning to those who boast themselves in an apostolic church:—these weak and beggarly elements had been divine ordinances; as much from God, as our own sacraments; their days and months, and times and years, had once had the sanction of divine authority. The folly of these Jewish converts was, that when the sun arose, they liked the twilight better: they too had a fancy for antiquity, and were exceedingly zealous for the traditions of their fathers. Who hath bewitched you, O Christians? Eighteen centuries the

church has abided under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, in the reading and preaching of the word; in spiritual communion with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. I say not if it has increased in numbers; Christ reckons not the value of his jewels by their numbers, but by the price they cost him. I say not if it has increased in faith; unless it be, as I think, a higher walk of faith to live without external evidence and sensible signs: "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." But I say most certainly, the Church should have increased in knowledge, in experience. Much that was prediction in the apostle's days, and therefore of course obscure, has been made plain by subsequent events: much that was promise has been fulfilled, much that was warning has been inflicted: while even future things acquire something of distinctness, as we approach the portals of the eternal city. New Revelations we have not, and cannot have; the book is sealed. But does not light and heat increase by longer shining? Does not perception become acute by longer gazing? Do all mental faculties suffer a reverse, when they come to be exercised upon divine truth, and

grow dull by using, and incapable by practice, and ignorant by learning? Is the Holy Spirit indeed so poor a teacher, that he has spoiled the scholarship of God's adopted family, since the day that he took it out of the hands of seers, and prophets, and inspired apostles, to carry it on himself? It is a strange conclusion, and yet there are those that think so. It is not my purpose here to make hasty and bitter charges, but I ask a question, and let those who read their writings look to them for a reply. Do these Oxford theologians believe in the Holy Spirit's agency at all, in carrying on the work of salvation, and leading men to the knowledge of the truth? Is it quite impossible that one who should have grown up under their exclusive ministration, might answer us, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost?"

How wilt thou bear with us, Eternal God, for thy despised benefits? Instead of standing with their loins girt, and their lamps burning, prepared to meet the bridegroom at his coming, in the sober, prayerful watchfulness of an expectant Church; christians, at this late hour, are calling back the signs of darker days, the beggarly elements that God has done with.

While one party are acting over again the confusion of the new-born Church at Corinth, and "every one hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation," but can neither explain their doctrines, nor interpret their tongues, nor make proof of their revelations, nor abide by their own interpretations for three months together; another party are betaking themselves to the carnal ordinances of the apostate Church of Rome, "in will-worship and humility, and neglecting of the body; in meat and in drink, and in respect of an holiday": or worse, for there is worse, and scarcely now concealed,—“sitting in the temple of God, opposing and exalting themselves above all that is called God;” their vague traditions above his sacred word; their perishable church establishments above his eternal covenant; their works of penance, self-denial, and devotion, above the justifying righteousness of Christ; their font and their altar, their ordinations and absolutions, above the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost. I do not bring quotations in proof of what I say, I would rather dissuade you from entering at all into the theories of these writers: but if you will, I would not have you go unwarned of the

snare that are laid, and the poisons that are mixed for the unwary. It is no part of my design to disseminate their errors by quotation. "Touch not, taste not, handle not:" but if ye have read, or will read, "As wise men, judge ye what I say."

LETTER III.

THE CHURCH.

“THE Church” has become the watch-word, not of unity, but of separation; not of established authority, but of novelty and innovation. Of whatever party it has been made the Shibboleth, traced to its origin, and watched to its results, it has never seemed to mean any thing but “themselves.” Our quarrel is not with words. We know that the term “Church” has many vernacular meanings, besides the only one it originally had. It means an ecclesiastical establishment maintained by law—such as the English or Scotch Church. It means a more extended profession of similar creeds—the Romish, the Greek Church. It means the ministry as distinguished from the people. It sometimes means no more than the four-square walls of some consecrated building.

We correctly use the word in all these senses : but it is indispensably necessary that when we speak of " The Church," we should know what we are talking about : that the simple be not unwarily misled, or artfully confused : till verily, in the minds of many it becomes a doubt, whether the oracles of God, the comforts of the Spirit, and the benefits of salvation, secured by eternal promise to the " Church of Christ," are assigned to a redeemed people, to an episcopal priesthood, to a national institution, or to certain piles of consecrated brick and mortar. In all its meanings, the word has a just application, and the thing signified its value and its uses : but every truth of God may be obscured, and every soul of man be ruined, by the stupid, or careless, or wilful intermingling of these uses.

In its divine origin, ' The Church ' had but one signification, and in Holy Writ it never acquired any other ; for though in the language of the apostles, it sometimes designated an assembly of saints, a certain portion of the Church, resident in a place, or the individual converts of a family, whence the plural " Churches ;" I cannot find a single text in which it means otherwise than either a portion or the whole of the faithful, of the vital and spiritual members of

Christ. The Church of the Thessalonians, and the Churches of Galatia, were neither creeds nor establishments, nor holy orders, but that "which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." More frequently the apostolic address is to the Church *in* or *at* a certain place, "the Church of God which is at Corinth," "the Church in thine house:" and, as if to prevent misapprehension, is generally accompanied with a definition, "To them that are sanctified—called to be saints, &c." We are justified therefore in saying that the word Church has but one Scriptural sense, and does never, as in common parlance, mean a ministry, an establishment, a creed, or a place of worship. It is most important to observe this: because little as names may signify, there are promises, rights, and privileges pertaining to "The Church" of vital and eternal moment; special promises, exclusive privileges, and unalienable rights, which have been claimed, and are claimed now, for something that men, not God, have given that name to. Praised be the boundless provision of his goodness, He has not trusted his revealed purpose to a name—He has granted us a volume to tell us what it means.

Our new theologians write a great deal about

the "Universal Church," but when we enquire where this comprehensive unity is to be found, they say it is in Rome, in England, and in Spain, and whether there be any part of it anywhere besides, they cannot tell; there may be, but they do not think so.

If we could bring them to plain speech, they would be equally uncertain about the Church in heaven, seeing how many of its members came there: for I think they would not venture to assert that there they are not. In fact, men are never quite honest who have error to establish,—nothing but truth is consistent. Either they hold that men can be saved by faith in the blood of Christ, and become members of the body of Christ by regeneration of the Holy Spirit, without belonging to their episcopal Church, and thus either their Church is not universal, or the Universal Church does not contain and comprehend its own several and proper parts: or they hold that men *cannot* so be saved, and thus unchristianize and unglorify, both saints on earth and saints in heaven, of whom they dare not say, and in the verity of their judgment, do not believe, that they are excluded. Indeed they do well to say they "cannot tell." The same thing has been said

before, by those who were seeking to confound the truth they had no mind to know.

In the repetition of the Creed, we all profess to believe in "One Catholic and Apostolic Church;" and such is the habitual inconsideration with which the multitude fall in with established practices, that there are numbers of our church-going population who have never paused to consider whether they believe this portion of the Creed or not, or what they intend by it if they do. This inconsiderateness is the vantage ground of error, the undefended outwork of which the enemy takes first possession to subjugate the understanding. For example, the preacher reminds the thoughtless and unreflecting of his Creed. Has he not always believed in "One Catholic and Apostolic Church?" The hearer supposes that he has. What then did he mean by it? This he does not know. The preacher suspects so, and is prepared to tell him. "'The Church' that we proclaim to you, is the very Catholic and Apostolic Church, which from your childhood you have acknowledged.' The unprepared mind is taken by surprise: the Catholic Church must be something, and since we know not what it is, it may be what they say: and the arrogant pretensions of a party are established upon the

indisputable fact, that somewhere or other there must be a Church-Catholic, without the pale of which there is no hope for the sinner, nor offer of salvation by the blood of Christ. The Holy Scripture then will serve the Tempter's purpose: "The Church" in which ye ignorantly believed, declare we now unto you. Advantage once taken of a confused understanding to pass off *their church* for "The Church" of the Creed and the Bible, nothing is easier than to prove that to it alone pertain all the promises and privileges of the Gospel, and whatever the death and testament of the Lord Jesus Christ have revealed and imparted to his believing people.

To distinguish what is human and sublunary, from what is spiritual and eternal in the Church below, we are accustomed to the words visible and invisible, real and external. These would do very well, if men were honest and Satan were away: but they are not Scripture terms, and they are not exact ones. The Church of God is not invisible, if by it is meant, that there are no external proofs and demonstrations of its existence. And the external church is no Christian Church at all, unless it have the doctrine and profession of the real Church. I

think the terms Visible and Invisible peculiarly inapt; and in the Oxford Tracts I see them abundantly made use of to confound the truth. This unseen earth is the same in the dead of night, as when we discern its features in the noon of day. Stars that never were beheld by mortal eyes, have as bright a radiance as those we nightly gaze upon. An imperfect vision, an intervening object, or a change of place, will make the most tangible existences undiscernible to us: but we do not call this nether globe invisible, because no human eye can scan its boundaries, or at one gaze discern its termination.

In application to the Church the use of the word is perfectly analogous. Unless it be impossible to distinguish the reflex image of Christ in his believing people, unless there be no perceptible difference between those that believe, and those that believe not—between those that obey, and those that obey not the Gospel; or no given rule by which to judge of what we see, then is the Church of God not properly invisible. To the eye of Omnipotence the Church is, and from all eternity has been, an entire and perfect whole—its head in heaven, its base upon the earth—its first stone in

Eden, its last in the eternal vaults above—its beginning in eternity, its end in eternity again—and its outline throughout all the interval of time, as clearly defined, as distinct and separate from the world around it, as yonder moon from the dark sky it passes over and the atmosphere it enlightens. As a whole, no human eye has scanned it. Finite vision balks us at every step. We cannot look through the veil of death, to see who has passed to glory; we cannot enter the close places of the bosom, to discover who is true and who is false; we cannot search into the womb of time to count the unborn spirits of the just. As in the natural world no finite eye has ever at one time beheld every particle of any thing, nor has any thing been visible to all eyes at once; but material existences have been beheld at times, and in places, and in parts, sufficient to attest their reality: so has it been always with the Redeemer's spiritual kingdom; it is a subterfuge to call the true Church invisible, and thence make over to something that is not it, the privileges and promises assigned in Scripture to a discernible body of men. The discernibility of the Church of Christ, in its separate parts and individual members, depends on things extraneous to

itself. There were seven thousand worshippers in Israel when the prophet found none—yet the mark of separation was an outward and discernible one—they had not bowed the knee to Baal. There are some who will not see, and some who cannot see, the difference between the children of God, and the children of this world; and alas, too many at all times busy in concealing the line of demarcation, and removing the landmarks, in hope that God and Satan will not know their own. And Oh, how zealously the powers of hell have spent themselves from the beginning to obliterate the line of separation, or substitute a false one. May Almighty goodness confound that purpose now! To the single eye and willing mind, the characteristics of the true Church of Christ are, and always have been, sufficiently well defined: by the light of the Spirit and the word, its parts become visible as we approach them near, its great outline as we behold it at a distance; and whether it be “The seven Churches that are in Asia,” or the Church in the wilderness, or the Church in thine house, or the still, lone altar that burns within our bosom—though men and devils may conspire to hide it, the kingdom of Jesus upon earth is a discernible

reality. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The High Priest of Israel wore bells and pomegranates on the borders of his garment—the fruits of righteousness in his heart, and the words of righteousness on his lips. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?" Not the candle of the Lord's lighting, be assured. I do not say that we can make our light manifest in the eyes of all men; our Lord himself could not do that. They called the Head of the Church Beelzebub, and found the chief Corner-stone a stumbling-block and an offence. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." But there is nothing hid that shall not be made manifest, to them that choose not darkness rather than light.

Yes, my friend, there is "*One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.*" I have no power to tell you what I think it is. Would that I had thoughts expansive enough, an imagination sublime enough, to reach and compass what it is indeed. When St. Paul perhaps beheld it, he knew not whether he was in the body or out; and he might not, because he could not, tell us what it was. The Almighty himself has not

told us, except by figurative and inadequate expressions and similitudes of earthly things. The things unseen are figured by the things that are seen, as unlike them perhaps as earth to heaven. All that human language can express, or human ideas compass, the Word and the Spirit have done to exhibit to us Jehovah's great design. Images have been multiplied lest a single one should be mistaken. The Church has been called a kingdom of which Christ is king—a sheepfold of which He is the Shepherd—a body, of which He is the head—a family of whom He is the first-born brother—a bride of whom He is the husband. And lest all definitions should be, and because they must be, insufficient, Almighty Wisdom made in the presence of mankind a temporal exhibition or representation of "The Church," in the adoption and history of the Jewish nation.

In this great manifestation of the eternal mind, "Unity, Security, and Exclusiveness" are the leading ideas. The Church is one—as in our Creed we say it is. As certainly as there is but One God and but one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that these two are one—our Lord himself making use of the comparison—"That they may be one even as we are one," so

certainly has the Saviour but one redeemed Church—but one fold, but one kingdom, but one body, but one bride. “My dove, my undefiled is one.” “By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.” 1 Cor. xii. 13. “There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism—one God and Father of all.” It is needless to multiply quotations—the whole Scripture is an unbroken exhibition of this truth—embodied, as it were, in the typical dispensation—wherein, to make the type more perfect, and the unity more sure, the whole nation descended from a single father—“from the loins of one man as many as the stars in multitude:” and while the type remained, there was but one Temple—but one place in which acceptable service and sacrifice could be offered. They who will multiply Churches may as well multiply Gods, and make many Saviours; and so in fact they do. Every set of men who have called themselves “The Church,” apart from the general body of believers, have in some form or other set up other Saviours, and put their trust in something beside the cross of Christ, and added something to the faith of Christ as necessary to salvation.

We speak of the Churches of England and Rome; of Calvinistic and Reformed and Presbyterian Churches: expletives significant of temporal separations and mundane differences—differences of faith, of discipline, or opinion, applicable to the church in the customary usage of the word. But no such expletive is applicable to the Church of God. It is One; and as there is but one name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, there is but one name and body of the saved—"The Church, which is his body." Understand me rightly—I do not mean that these temporal distinctions signify nothing: or nothing of importance before God. The terms, as we use them, may discriminate no less than between truth and falsehood—between religion and idolatry—the service of God and the service of the Wicked One. But they cannot dissever the body of Christ—so that a member of Christ may be not a member of the true Church. In this particular the audacity of the Church of Rome has set an example of honesty and consistency, which her modern imitators cannot attain to. She claims the Unity entire; and teaches that there is no salvation out of her own pale. This we understand. But when these ultra-episco-

pallians say to us, We and we only are the Church of God ; but there may be some children of God without our limits—we answer them—If one individual be saved in the faith of Christ, and become incorporate in the body of Christ, without being a member of your Church, then is your Church not commensurate with the Church of God, and you have no right to arrogate to yourselves preferentially and exclusively its promises, privileges, or powers, under the appellation of the Church Catholic, the Church Apostolic, or whatever else you are pleased to call yourselves.

For another great characteristic of the Church of God, revealed in Holy Scripture, is “ Exclusiveness.” There are no promises out of Christ, apart from the body of Christ. This is so manifest in Holy Writ, that having once identified their church with “ The Church ” of the Bible, or confused the minds of men respecting the different uses of the word, nothing can be more easy than to prove from the word of God, of Apostles, and of Fathers, the danger and ruin that must attend upon separation from themselves. We have only to interchange words synonymously used in Scripture, to perceive this immediately. There can be no child of God, out of the family of God,—no mem-

ber of Christ out of the body of Christ—no servant of God out of the kingdom of God—of course no worshipper of God out of the Church of God. I observe that our modern papists, wanting the courage of their predecessors, evade this truth, by saying there was a Job, &c, not in the Jewish Church. This is presuming rather largely upon the ignorance or heedlessness of their readers. The Jewish nation never assumed to be the Church Catholic or Church Universal, but merely a type and shadow of it. The privileges of the temporal adoption could not be enjoyed without entering the ceremonial covenant by circumcision, thus signifying, that the spiritual adoption could not be attained without entering by regeneration of the Spirit into the covenant of grace—the Israel of God. But the figure is not the substance. Seth and Noah, and Abraham himself, and most likely Job too, were in the covenant or Church of Christ, before the figurative dispensation began. The promises were subsequently vested in the Jewish, as now in the Christian Church,—but as parts only of a whole. Neither one nor the other could be the body of Christ entire, else had he two bodies, and members existing previously to either! The Church

Apostolic and the Church Universal are not properly convertible terms—they are commensurate in extent of present existence, but not in extent of duration. Even this small distinction is of importance, when Baptism, the ordinance appointed of God for admission to the Apostolic Church, is asserted to be the foundation stone of the Church Universal, always necessary to salvation and efficacious thereto. But neither Baptism, the ordinance of admission to the Christian Church, nor Circumcision, the ordinance of admission to the Jewish Church, was made the entrance door of Christ's Universal Kingdom. Thousands have passed these doors, that never entered there; and numbers have entered who came not by these ways. Abraham was chosen and received the promises, being yet uncircumcised; as did Adam, and subsequent believers in the promised seed of the woman. "I am the door"—the only door of his own Universal Church. But remark how this is dealt with. They tell you there is no safety out of the Universal Church: which is eternal truth, and can be proved from the Bible in every part. Then there is no safety out of the Christian Church, as established by Christ and his Apostles. This is true now,

though it has not been always so : applied to the present time, it can be proved by the Bible also. But they have already substituted a part for the whole of the Universal Church, and since they have not departed from the truth, we may not have perceived it. One more such substitution, and their point is carried ; and we are plunged into the strangest misconception of the truth. For next they say, the Episcopal Church is Apostolic,—therefore there is no safety out of it. We believe the position is true still, and can be maintained on Scripture also : but the inference is the grossest error. Again they have substituted one word for another, and trusting we have not perceived it, they make the Episcopal Church, the Apostolic Church, and the Universal Church convertible terms, to persuade us that what is true of the one is necessarily true of all : whereas it is no more an inference that a presbyterian of the present day is not saved, because there is now no salvation out of the Apostolic Church, of which the Episcopal Church is an integral part, (miserable logic this for Oxford—supposing it admitted so to be,) than that Abraham was not saved because there was never any salvation out of the

Universal Church, of which the Christian Church is the only portion extant. Why do they not do as their sister Rome does,—lay claim to the exclusiveness as well as to the unity of the Church, and say at once that their Church is the only extant portion of the Church of Christ, and therefore there can be no salvation out of it? This is what they mean, or they mean nothing; and need not trouble us.

Another great characteristic of the Church of God, is its "Security,"—no individual soul within it can be lost. Christ will not be head of a dismembered body,—king of a disentire kingdom,—corner-stone of an uncompleted building,—shepherd of a scattered and devoured flock,—husband of a defiled bride,—brother of an adopted child of Hell.

Of those whom we see living now without the Church on earth, many will be seen to enter in; and of those whom we think we see living within it, many will be seen to go out; but they go out from among us because they were not of us; if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. The Eternal Eye, whose glance annihilates at once all time as well as space, alone scans the outline of his Universal Church: but as it must comprehend

every part of itself, it can comprehend no more than its parts: as there is no salvation without it, there is no destruction within it. "I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Take our Lord's own description of his body which is the Church. "The glory that thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." In this mysterious Unity there can be no lost ones, and from it no one lost: else would neither it nor they be made perfect. We have in this passage the Unity, the Exclusiveness, and the Security of the Church exhibited at once. Rome saw this; and would not invalidate her claim to be identified with the Universal Church of Christ, by giving up one of its essential privileges: She boldly promises salvation to all who die in her communion. Will the Oxford party do this? Not yet, perhaps, although they ought, consistently with their doctrines of the Sacraments, &c.: but they will presently, because they must, otherwise

they forfeit their identity with the Church of God, and all the powers and privileges they appropriate to themselves as such.

When we consider what those privileges are—when we put out of sight the mixed, imperfect, and unstable substitutes that pass among us under its hallowed name, and contemplate the Church of Christ as God has designed it and disclosed it: and consider what it is to be a member of that Church, and what it is to be excluded from it,—O it is a thing to fill all heaven and earth with wonder, that we should thus be bandying words about it, and occupy ourselves with anything but to enter in and take possession; that any substitute should satisfy, or any counterfeit deceive us.

“That they also may be one in us.” Contemplate the amazing idea for yourself. I have no power to exhibit it to you. Take the poor suffering, sinning child of earth, dying in body, and in spirit dead—call him by all the names that God has called him by since the curse came upon him, although he had been once his own fair workmanship;—“servants of sin, children of the devil:”—think of him as you see him every day around you—“earthly, sensual, devilish”—judge of him as in the secrecy of your

own heart you know he is—"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Contrast this poor grovelling, perishing, earth-worm, with what is said of the accepted sons of God, the living members of the Church of Christ. "The glory that thou hast given me, have I given them." "Children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." And can you—dare you believe that the difference depends upon the sprinkling of an unconscious baptism, or rather on the hand that sprinkles it; for they have degraded the sign in the very act of exalting it, and made that on which the regenerating Spirit depends, dependent on themselves. Behold the world, as it lieth in wickedness: as you hear of it, read of it, know it; with its brevity, its vanity, its emptiness, and its vexations. "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" "As in the days of Noah, until the flood came and took them all away." Compare this God-defying, God-forgetting, God-abandoning world, with the high and holy expectations of the Church of Christ, "Now are we the sons of God; but it does not yet appear what we shall be."

“ We know that if this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Will you be so besotted and befooled by a mere confusion of words, as to believe that one of these conditions is ‘ Presbyterian,’ the other ‘ Episcopal:’ if the one be an unhappy and unsafe condition, it depends on their sinful and polluted hands to pass you to the other? Oh shame upon such trifling in things so awful! Our eyes fill with tears while we weigh this nonsense against the fate of an immortal soul, suspense between heaven and hell; against the sacrifice, the life, the love that bought the Church out of a ruined world. My friend, if you know the difference between happiness and misery—the mortal anguish of unforgiven sin, when the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in the soul, and the terrors of death take hold upon it—when nothing remains of time but its iniquities—of life, but the memory of its sins—when earth resigns you, and heaven disowns you, and Satan claims you, and hell expects you: compared with the calm contrition and grateful acquiescence of the pardoned sinner, who gives his guilt to Jesus, and takes his saving righteousness instead; and dressed in

the best robe of his Father's house, sits down at his Father's table; and every good thing becomes a Father's blessing, and every evil thing a Father's kind reproof:—when the void heart finds wherewith to sate itself, wanting capacity to love enough; and faculties and sympathies, and powers, thriftless expenditure of a harlot world, have found their true and only sufficient object—the Brother, the Husband—the more, far more than either!—when every good thought is an earnest of his Spirit, and every bad thought a remembrance of his cross—when God is love, and life is hope, and death is joy: This, my friend, this is the separation between 'The Church' and the world—the test and distinction of every member in particular, when he comes to realize his own condition: Concentrate your thoughts one moment upon the contrast, and try—and if there be lightness in your mind, or a smile of ridicule upon your lips at the transition, you read it not in such mind as I write it; there is no mirth, except in hell, while things like these are tampered with—try the words 'Dissenter,' 'High-churchman,'—Are they fit?

The children of the kingdom have been called by many names, but these are not among them :

exhibited in many characters, but neither one of these. In the cloud of witnesses by whom we are compassed in Gospel testimony, we shall look equally in vain for pontifical assumption or sectarian cavil.

The Church is Christ, with the incorporated members of his mystical body on earth and in heaven: that humanity which is joined in eternal and inseverable union with the deity of the Son of God. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified, are all of one." We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "The Church" is *where* Christ is, in the presence of his grace or the indwelling of his Spirit; "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit that he hath given us." The Church is *what* Christ is:—the same in the sight of God: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them:"—the same in the sight of men: "The world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." In retrospect the same: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the

circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein ye also are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses: blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, nailing it to his cross." In progression the same: "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." In anticipation the same: "Whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

This is "The Church" of the Bible and of the Creed, of which all who are in Christ, whatever else they be or be not, are "members in particular." To it in unity, in propriety, in perpetuity, appertain the promises and privileges of the gospel of salvation, made first to

Adam, renewed to the Patriarchs, exhibited in the ceremonial covenant, declared by the Prophets, fulfilled in Christ, confirmed in the sacraments, and committed to the witness of the Spirit and the Word. Does the anxious enquiring soul still say, "Where, Lord? What is it to be in Thee?" Rome answers, It is to be in our Holy Mother Church, the only representative of Christ on earth. Our modern hierarchists are driven harder, and can only say, It is to be in "THE Church," which is a response, but no answer; being no more than to say, "To be in Christ, is to be in Christ." Consult the Scriptures, and they will answer you with no such play of words. The Bible does not tell us that to be in Christ is to be in the Church, for it is the same thing. The terms are synonymous in Scripture language. But from the beginning to the end of the hallowed volume, is exhibited to us what it is to be in Christ, to believe in Christ, to come to Christ, to have Christ, to put on Christ: all varieties of expression for the same thing. The Bible discloses to us the members of Christ, not as abstract notions and invisible existences; but demonstrably, humanly, personally. Visible, when they went out, not knowing whither, not

having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers upon earth." Visible, where "by faith they kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." In a figure visible, where the world and the false prophet would rather not have seen them, stretching their tents upon the plains of Moab. You may behold the Church upon the field of Luz, where a solitary saint passed the night alone with God:—and where the Assyrian was compelled to see it, walking unharmed amid the fiery furnace:—and where the very brute acknowledged it, when man had thought to hide it in his den:—in deserts, in mountains, in dens, and caves of the earth, in upper chambers, in scoffing synagogues, and persecuting counsels, in streets, in market-places and in prisons.

Or would you see it now, in vital demonstration upon earth? Ask of the Spirit, and he will disclose it to you; made audible by profession of the faith, and visible by a life of faith, in every penitent believing heart. For "thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the

house that ye build unto me ? and where is the place of my rest ? For all those things have been, saith the Lord ; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2.

LETTER IV.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

IN her infancy and childhood, under the ministration of angels and inspired messengers, the Church was the learner, not the teacher—the recipient, not the disseminator of revealed truth. Abraham in Hebron, and Joseph in Egypt, and Daniel in the Persian court, were lights indeed in a dark place, but not to give light to the heathen world around them. We do not learn that they were to communicate to the nations that knew not God, the revelations of his grace, or the promises of him that was to come. “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” was answered to Pharaoh only by the exhibition of his power—to Israel alone was it communicated that Jehovah was their Father’s God. Seers and prophets, “Searching what or what manner of time the spirit of

Christ which was in them did signify," delivered the word without comment of their own, or other exposition than that which they received with it from heaven : and whither they were sent with it, there they left it—neither the hearer nor the messenger had any commission to carry the revelation through the world, and invite the nations into the kingdom of God. Not till the Church attained to manhood under Christ and his Apostles, was she set for a light to the Gentiles, " holding forth the word of life."

At the time appointed of the Father, no longer under bondage to the elements of the world, when the indwelling Spirit and the written word became her only guides, and not till then, the Church became herself the preacher of righteousness and teacher of the truth ; calling upon men every where to repent, and be converted to the faith of Christ ; and she who had hitherto been the recipient only of the light, became the sole distributor of that of which she has been at all times the alone possessor.

It is a high, a holy, a most happy privilege to be the Spirit's instrument for the dissemination of the word — " A spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices,

acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "To preach good tidings to the meek—to bind up the broken-hearted—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God."

To this high commission of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church, all who elect themselves to represent her have laid claim. But who is to personate the Church of the Bible now? Not the aggregate body of the believing sons of Rome: nor even the "Universal Church" of our modern Apostolics. This will not serve the purpose; the word must once more change its meaning: "*the Church*" now means a succession of ordained ministers, an ecclesiastical council, a sovereign priesthood; and this new body of Christ must, as usual, be *themselves*; the sole depositors and almoners of life eternal: they only understand, they only have a right to teach, they only have the Word and the Sacraments committed in Scripture to the Church of Christ.

"The Church" nevertheless, in its altered meaning, is still to be the talismanic word, to mystify our understanding and turn the

dross to gold : and we are spoken to of the opinions of " The Church," the authority of " The Church," the decisions of " The Church," and to believe, if we will, that it is still " The Church " of the Bible and the Creed. In one particular it is no matter whether it be or not : for the powers claimed have never been possessed.

" The Church " of the Bible never had *opinions*. She obeyed the word spoken, and finally the word written, but neither spake, nor wrote, nor determined in things spiritual, otherwise than by inspiration of the Holy Spirit : and we do most positively and firmly deny that she ever has, or can have, acquired the right, or power, or capability of doing so. She is to hold fast that which she has received, and communicate that which she is taught of the word, but she has no opinions, revelations, or interpretations irrespective of it. Seers and prophets had no *opinions*, when they spake as they were moved : inspired apostles gave none, when they wrote the things that they had seen and heard, and their hands had handled of the word of life : except in that very remarkable instance in which St. Paul, as if in holy fear, lest his fallible judgment should be mistaken for the

mind of God, specifies that the Spirit had given him no instruction on the point submitted to him.

In the Jewish ritual, where forms, and ceremonies, and all outward circumstantial, were types and shadows of things spiritual, no exercise of opinion was allowed, not so much as in the ornaments of a candlestick, or the colour of a garment. "Look that thou make them after the pattern that was showed thee in the mount." And I cannot pass this subject by, without calling your attention to the fact, apparently overlooked by the advocates of divine authority in the ministry. They appeal to the Jewish priesthood, to Moses and Aaron, as an example of God's vengeance on the disobedient : mindless that neither in the wilderness, nor on Mount Sion, was the most trivial ceremony trusted to traditionary practice, or to the judgment and opinion of the Lawgiver and the Priest.

The word which the people resisted was not, Thus saith Moses, or Thus saith Aaron, nor Thus saith "The Church," nor Thus thy Father Abraham. It was "Thus saith the Lord." There does occur to me, indeed, one instance during the delay of divine commu-

nication, when the High Priest of Israel had an *opinion* of his own: and the people acceded to it. "These be thy Gods, O Israel:" and very naturally follows upon this the wise man's saying, 'There is nothing new under the sun,'—whether it be the molten calf, or the baptismal font, that is to bring us out of Egypt.

You will hear it asserted, that *if* the opinion of the whole church at every period could be obtained, in any particular, that opinion would be infallible. This is so purely chimerical, it is scarcely worth consideration. I leave it to the colleges to demonstrate how any multiplication of the fallible can produce infallibility; it is enough for common minds, that the "members in particular of the body of Christ," cannot be consulted at any given moment; much less throughout all time; and if they could, they would not be of one mind in anything respecting which the Bible admits of a difference; perhaps they would agree in nothing exactly, but that in which every redeemed soul agrees in time and in eternity; in ascribing "salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb."—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God

and his father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

We, of course, are aware that the power claimed for "the Church" does not affect to set aside the Scripture, but assumes the right of interpretation where God has spoken, and of decision wherein He has been silent. For the former, if there be anything in the Bible not to be understood without an interpreter, the interpreter, and not the Bible, is the Oracle of God: and we do deny it of all except the Spirit of God. For the latter, wherein God has not spoken, man must determine; and to despise the wisdom of the wise, the experience of the aged, the knowledge of the learned, or the example of the pious, would be as senseless in things pertaining to religion, as in all other things. I should think it as little probable that the judgment of the Church of God at large, should be essentially wrong on such a point, as that our whole body of jurisconsults should be mistaken in a point of law. Still the united judgment of the whole united Church, could such a thing be had, would not amount to an infallible decision of the Almighty, and therefore could not be imperative on the conscience, however unreasonable the dissent from it might be.

But in fact, the claim to infallible judgment and indisputable authority on behalf of the Church Catholic, is a fiction; the word has changed its import, it is not "The Church," but "the ministry, for whom the right of interpretation is claimed. "The Church" is to be deprived and divested of even the rights she has, the exercise of her judgment and her faith upon the written word, and to submit to the dictation of a ministerial succession. Now I am firmly persuaded, that they who claim this on their own behalf, do take to themselves an authority which Jewish priests and prophets never had, which inspired apostles never claimed, which, with deepest awe and reverence I say it, the Eternal Son of God did never exercise during his ministration upon earth. He who alone had the power and the right; He who is Lord of all, and doth whatsoever pleaseth him in earth or heaven, Jesus, the Eternal, the Infallible, the Church's Head, and her High Priest for ever; Jesus, during his ministry on earth, subjected his own testimony to the witness of the Spirit and the written word. He never used his higher authority, his secret participation in the counsels of his Father, to supersede, or suppress, or dispense with the

Holy Scriptures. We stand deeply affected by the humiliation of that High and Holy One, when we say, Jesus did not ask to be believed by the creatures of his hands, upon his own statement. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true;" did not demand to have His—how monstrous is human arrogance!—even His opinion, taken without evidence and without examination: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." Often as my mind has dwelt on the mysterious words, I could think that till this hour I never felt the depth of the humility which said, "I can of mine own self do nothing, as I hear, I judge." My friend, they tell you, these aspirants to spiritual authority are holy men. If holiness be the likeness of Christ, I think they are of all men the most unholy; for I see nothing in the features of humanity so darkly contrasted as arrogance and humility. Jesus identified his own truth with the truth of the written word, and demanded no more credit than the testimony of those Scriptures would confirm. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." He stooped to make the reception of his own ministry dependent on the

reception of the Mosaic records. "If ye believe not his writings, how can ye believe my words?" And He made the belief of those writings sufficient to salvation in the reception of himself: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me." During his entire ministration upon earth, Jesus read the word, he expounded it, he unfolded its spiritual meaning; he demanded to be judged by it, he subjected himself to it, he bound himself by it, he lived, as it were, only to verify and to fulfil it. True, that word was his own word, spoken aforetime to Moses and the prophets; and all that he now spake in the flesh, or afterwards communicated by his Spirit to the apostles, was to be incorporated with it, to be of like authority for ever: but not till the veil of humanity was put off, and his Godhead proved by ascension into heaven. They who beheld his works, and listened to his words, had ample evidence that He was the Son of God; and because they had, He says *only* because they had, they were guilty of rejecting his testimony. "If I had not done amongst them the works that no other man did, they had not had sin." I know not *whose successors* they are, but certainly I think not his, who demand to have their views and opinions

received by the body of Christ, because they are—because *they say* they are ordained to be the representatives of Christ's authority, and interpreters of his word : which can be proved, neither by their works nor their wisdom, as we think, nor by anything but the writings of their predecessors, " The Fathers ;" a long ancestral line, which it has needed no small heraldic skill to trace, and whose own title to such an authority, if they claim it, can be as ill substantiated, as that of their lineal descendants.

That which He received of his Father and exercised during his own ministry, the Son of Man committed to his apostles ; the power to reveal the Father's will, attested by the word, and witnessed by the Spirit, in works that, like their master, they were enabled to perform. " As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The apostolic representatives of their High Priest in heaven, did as their master had done ; they asked no credit for anything they said, that could not be proved in like manner. How similar to that of Jesus is the language of St. Paul. " As we have received, so we speak." " I judge not my own self, for I know nothing by myself." They knew, as He had known, that what they said was divine and infallible

truth, for they had received it of the Son, as the Son had heard it of the Father; but they who had, and knew they had a revelation, and knew that their testimony was true, submitted themselves to proof as Jesus did; to the same proof, and the same was vouchsafed to them—the sure word of prophecy, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, with the miraculous gifts communicated by him. “Paul, an apostle, not of man, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,” demands no credit without examination, and no submission without enquiry. “Though *we*, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel than that we have preached, let him be accursed.” “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.” “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The Bereans are commended, not because they submitted at once to the dictum of the apostles, but because they searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

The word of the apostles was proved to be the word of God; the fire has tried it, and the Spirit has sealed it. We speak not now of the authority

of Paul, or of Peter ; if we do, we speak amiss. It is " Thus saith the Lord." We ask not for the opinions of James or John. I repeat it, inspired teachers never had opinions. As they received, they spake. " We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty, for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory : This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven, we heard when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as a light that shineth in a dark place : until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." St. Peter here speaks of but two evidences ; the testimony of the Spirit to their senses, and the more sure word of prophecy to their faith ; leaving the last only with the Church, till the indwelling Spirit should illuminate their hearts. There is something so definitive in these last words of the aged apostle, closing, as it were, with the keys committed to him, the deposit of the truth, we might almost say he died with a

warning on his lips against those who should thereafter claim to lock and unlock at their pleasure, and rob the treasure-house under covert of his name. "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the Apostles of Jesus Christ." This was the sum of all the Church's retrospect: and of all her expectations this—"In all holy conversation, looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Proceeding thence to warn us of the mysteries of Holy Writ, and the danger of being led away with the error of the wicked, why did not the departing saint make known the safety that might be found in Tradition, in Apostolic Succession, and holy Mother Church?

Is it much, then, when certain men profess to have received something of God, by derivation from the Apostles, which is of equal authority with the Written Word, or so nearly so, as to be imperative upon all men to receive it; no matter whether they call it revelation,

tradition, or interpretation; is it much to demand that they bring the same proof of their authority that the blessed Jesus and his apostles did—the testimony of the Spirit and the word—the Spirit that spake in Jordan, that descended in cloven tongues at Pentecost, that wrought in the disciples when devils were subject to them, when they laid hands on the sick and they recovered, when they took up serpents and they did not hurt them, cast off their fetters, and broke their prison gates? Rome—(for *our dear sister* will still be found the wiser)—Rome was prepared for this; the word was against her, and she forbade the reading of it, while miracles were the very strong hold of her power. Prophets and apostles were nothing to her in these achievements; and by them, in an ignorant age, when the only persons who could have detected her impositions were parties to the fraud, she carried every thing by this apparent witness of the Almighty to her truth. Alas, the day once more! Our poor Redivivus has fallen on evil times. Women now can reason upon their nervous system, and optical illusions will not deceive a school-boy. Penny Magazines will explain away their miracles, should the imposition be attempted; which

after the recent failure in a certain other "One and only Apostolic Church," I think it will not. Unless in our poor benighted Ireland, and there we trust not long,—the recovery of hypochondriacal patients, and the ravings of hysterical women, will not pass now for the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Unwitnessed by that word which they claim to interpret on their own behalf, or by any manifestations of the Spirit which are not common to all believers, the claimants to Apostolic authority have no appeal but to "the Church"—that is, "the Fathers of the Church"—that is, once more, *themselves*: for the Fathers are the very Apostolic succession for the *jus divinum* of which they are contending. I am not willing to examine this testimony, because, "If I bear witness to myself, my witness is not true." If the first Fathers of the Church of God pretended to any traditional knowledge of the mind of God, or any lordship over the faith of God's heritage, we might call upon them to prove in like manner what it is, and how they came by it. But I believe they did not, until pride and superstition began to overcloud the dawn of Gospel light, and they who strove for mastery in the

churches, found something necessary beside the word of God, to settle their various pretensions, and restrain the party spirit of their hearers. I have before me the words of Clement and Ignatius, who being bishops by ordination of the Apostles themselves, should, if any could, have known the nature and extent of their commission. St. Clement thus writes of it, "The Apostles, with the greatest care ordained the rulers of the Church, and delivered a rule of succession in future, that after their decease other approved men might succeed. Those then who by them, or in succession by other choice, were ordained rulers *with the approbation of the whole church*, and who in a blameless conduct have ministered to the flock of Christ in humility, who for a series of years have been well reported of by all men, these, we think it unrighteous to deprive of the ministry. Nor is it a sin of small magnitude to eject from the sacred office men whose ministry hath been thus blameless and holy." This seems moderate language for the nearest of kin in the Apostolic hereditament. We might smile, if a tear did not become our feelings better, on comparing the meek remonstrance of this holy bishop, whose proudest pre-eminence in the

church was the right to suffer most, and die the first, with the tone of our young collegians of to-day, who having taken in at the legitimate source of Cam or Isis, the sufficient quantity of knowledge, are waiting in their studies, or in the amusement of foreign travel, the appointed age at which a mortal hand is to confer upon them an exclusive right to know the mind of God, to interpret his sacred word, and give efficacy to his most holy sacraments ; saying nothing of those whose years of service in the ministry may best be numbered by the changes in their opinions.

Again, St. Clement, " We see with grief, brethren, that ye have deprived of the ministry some of your godly pastors, whose labours for your souls deserve a different treatment." Why does Clement not plead, if he knew it, the divine right of episcopal ordination, rather than length of service and blamelessness of life : why not the laying on of hands, and consequent impartation of the Holy Spirit, instead of their humility and good report of all men. Why not threaten the recusants, who it seems not only left their pastors, but deprived them, with the fate of Koran, Dathan, and Abiram, for presuming to judge at all, instead of warn-

ing them of the sin of so unjust a judgment? No, St. Clement, ordained indeed of God, and called of the Spirit, did what his Master did, what inspired Apostles did,—he referred the church of Corinth to the Written Word. “Do,” he says, “Do take up the writings of the blessed Apostle: what did he say to you in the beginning of the Gospel? Truly by *divine inspiration* he gave you directions concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because even then ye were splitting into parties.” It cannot fail to occur to you that the passage here referred to, was not a demand upon spiritual obedience, but a caution, “not to think of men above what was written.”

Ignatius, if all is his that is attributed to him, was too superstitious and contentious for his order to be fully admitted as a witness for himself: the extreme absurdity of some things in his writings tends to invalidate the remainder, distinguished and pious martyr as he was. But even Ignatius' latest words, most likely to be his best, when prepared for martyrdom in the amphitheatre, have the same tone of moderation and humility, with respect to the ministry and to himself. “If the prayer,” he says, “of one or two has so much strength, how much more that of the

Bishop and the whole Church. He who separates himself is proud and condemns himself, for it is written:—Ignatius too, appeals to Scripture, instead of tradition,—“For it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us study therefore, obedience to the Bishop, that we may be subject to God.” Again, “I do not,” he says, “dictate to you as if I were a person of any consequence. For though I am bound for the name of Christ, I am not yet perfected in Christ Jesus. For now I begin to be a disciple, and speak to you as my teachers, for I ought to be sustained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long-suffering. But since charity will not suffer me to be silent concerning you, for this reason I take upon me to exhort you to run together with me according to the mind of God.”

I am not called upon to examine the apostolicity of the Church of England. Believing it, as I do, to be the most scriptural, and the most divinely blessed of all extant communions in the Church of Christ, it is beside the purpose here to explain to you why I think so, or on what ground I believe the church establishment of this country to be the especial object of the great enemy's assaults, because it is at this moment the very focus of Gospel light and

truth, whose lamp with all his machinations, he has not yet prevailed to dim. The theme is near to my heart, but it is not my subject. I leave it to Oriel College and the Lateran, to settle their respective claims to the Terra Incognita of Apostolic authority; for I believe that it is no where—nor ever has been anywhere, except in The Word, not of Apostles, but of God.

Every body corporate, civil or religious, whether established by man or ordained of God, must have a legislative authority within itself, and an executive power to enforce its rules, by the expulsion of insubordinate members. In civil institutions, if the rules and regulations of the incorporate body have the sanction of the legislature, and be part and parcel of the law of the land, the higher authority will enforce the execution of them, and compel obedience; but if otherwise, the members must settle their management among themselves; the state taking care only that by oppression, violence, or fraud, no breach of the peace be committed. Thus I understand the position of the Church of God upon earth. It is incorporate of God himself. It has his authority, and the sanction of his laws. It has them morally, spiritually, doctrinally, practically. Whenever

the judgment of the executive, whether vested in the ministry or the people, or both conjointly, is warranted by the known law of God, it will be confirmed and enforced by his power. In the execution of this law, "Whatsoever they bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," and in the just construction of it, "Whosoever sins they remit shall be remitted unto them." But if ecclesiastical bodies have, as it were, bye-laws of their own, which for the better ordering of their affairs, it became necessary they should have as soon as Christian Churches were separated and scattered through the world, the Almighty Lawgiver takes no cognizance of these; they who agree to them can alone be bound by them, and must see to their due execution. *He* will see only that his Gospel law of liberty be not infringed, and his eternal law of love be not transgressed against. "He that is spiritual, judgeth all things; but he himself is judged of no man: for who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?"

There is no doubt, I think, that Church Polity was, in very early times, an appointment of God, for the spiritual good of mankind, as the institution of civil government was for their

temporal benefit. "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice," and it is commanded of every subject of every realm, to obey the king and such as are put in authority under him, conforming themselves in all things lawful to the laws and customs of the civil community, of which providence or their own choice has made them members. In like manner, I think, hath the Almighty set up churches—I now use the word church in its secondary sense, that of an external communion—as temporal impermanent instruments of his eternal purpose. In the churches He has set various orders, diversities of gifts, differences of administration, "some prophets, some apostles, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"—and he has required that we be all subject one to another, according as our places are; and to the ministers who watch for our souls, as unto them that must give account. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

But I see no more reason to suppose that God ordained one universal church polity, with a supreme and finite head, whether of papal monarchy, or episcopal aristocracy, or sectarian

republicanism, than that he has set up one universal sovereignty among the kingdoms of this world, save and except his own; for He is Head over all in church and state—King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Contrariwise, I believe that He never will do either, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the sons of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” and “the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.” When a successful hero aimed at a common sovereignty over the governments of Europe, its nations combined to cast him out from amongst them. When the Roman Pontiff assumed supremacy over the churches, they resisted his assumption and withdrew from his communion. And before that Apostate Church shall boast herself against our differences and divisions, let her look to it, if it be not her pride that has brought this sorrow on us: for I have often thought, whether He who once confounded the tongues of men, that they might no more build themselves a tower of strength against his wrath; has not purposely sent confusion into the minds of his servants, at once a retribution and a safe-

guard, that they may no more agree to build up a church in lofty independence of his Word.

Kings are declared to be the ministers of God for good, and not for wrath: but there is a limit to our submission to the powers that be, because there is above them a sovereign Lord of all, whose will must supersede them—“Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” The angel that brought the apostles out of prison in despite of this world’s power, bade them go straightway to the temple, and do again the thing that had been forbidden them. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood,” marks the sole boundary of lawful resistance to the powers that be.

Spiritual authorities, I apprehend, stand on the same ground, and are limited in like manner, by the supremacy of the Church’s Universal Head: all obedience to them being limited by his revealed will: and must be, as they often have been, resisted unto blood: the martyrs’ blood:—for be it remembered, heathen kings have scarcely been so cruel persecutors of the saints of God as the ecclesiastical authorities of Christian churches. May our own beloved Church of England never

do again, as she has done once, put her enemies in the right, and cast her devoted children, ministers and people, from her maternal bosom into the arms of her opponents. Thanks be to God, that time is not now ; there is yet neither occasion nor excuse to separate—but every reason to stand firm, and draw close, and fight hard, under her sacred banners—bright as she stands amid surrounding darkness—increasing in brightness as the darkness gathers. For be it remembered, that neither Oriel College, nor the Parish incumbency, nor the Theological Professor's chair, is the Church of England. There is more true faith, more spiritual light within the Church of England now than there ever was before, or than there is anywhere else. It is no small part of the value of an Establishment, a ritual, and a liturgy, that like our civil constitution, it as much constrains the rulers as the ruled. If the monarch on the British Throne forsakes her faith, she abdicates, and we are still the lieges of the protestant crown. And if our whole bench of Bishops should turn Puseyites, a thought more allied to a smile at present than a fear, it is they, not we, who cease to be members of the protestant church of England. The living members of

Christ's body now within her pale, have only to keep their ground against pontifical pretensions on the one hand, and seditious movements on the other; and with our zealous Gospel ministers, and our freely circulated Bibles, our Scriptural Articles, and our heart-touching Liturgy, should it ever be, as some forbode, that high-church aggression from above, and low-church innovation from beneath, should combine to lay her beautiful fabric in the dust, we shall still only be, what apostolic churches were, 'The Church in England,' instead of 'The Church of England;' and England, not the Church, will be the loser. She is the light of the world, and blessed are the nations that rejoice in her light. It is not with them to kindle or extinguish it.

I am not now to advocate national establishments and episcopal forms; it is not the least painful circumstance attending the high and arrogant pretensions of a mere party in the church, that her best defenders have been obliged to suspend their conflict with the demagogues of voluntarism, and do battle with the autocrats of high-church authority: and we who love our mother church the best, are forcibly enlisted to dispute her powers. If there is to be civil society, there must be civil govern-

ment. When a man is so mad as to commit outlawry upon himself, and live an unprotected alien in the world, he chooses for himself the curse of Cain, and must abide his choice; and if others will join with him, to live a set of brigands on the waste, and become aggressors upon the social compact, the laws of God and man must be enforced against them. I think it must be equally apparent to every mind that if there is to be social worship and church communion, there must be church government—national, congregational, or otherwise. Universal independence would be universal outlawry; most adverse to all that is made known to us of the mind and will of God; and for those spiritual marauders who make war on all orders and all forms alike, determined to follow nowhere, to conform to nobody, and adhere to nothing, I know not what we can do, but close our doors and guard our hearths and our sheep-folds against their depredations.

It cannot, I suppose, be doubted of any one, that there existed both under the Old Testament and the New, a mode of church communion, consecrated places, and appointed ministers. Undoubtedly the Father of a Patriarchal family was the first priest, as he was the first

king of primitive society. His altar was as moveable as his throne, and his church-establishment his own domestic tent. When the Almighty separated a nation for himself, He established a church also. Except the fact that He did so, I think we can draw little from the example of the Jewish ritual. The whole was a type, and we may say a miracle, out of the natural course of sublunary things. The entire legislation, civil and ecclesiastical, was of God—neither church nor state had any share in it, but to execute the law as given by Himself. The times, the places, the ceremonies and forms of words were all prescribed. The altar was kindled with unearthly fire: the priesthood was permanently chosen and consecrated for ever—the preachers, who were not the priests, were inspired prophets, and the Almighty was supernaturally consulted upon every requisite occasion. This has no parallel, and therefore can be no guide: and it is expressly declared in Scripture that the whole is done with. In the New Testament there can be no example of a national establishment, because till long subsequently to the close of inspiration, there never was a Christian nation. I do conceive therefore it is in vain to appeal to the

Scripture to know what such an establishment should be. But this I think most surely, that if the Almighty had intended to prescribe a form of church polity under the new dispensation, it would have been written as exactly as it was before. When the Church could be no longer one communion, different nations, of different habits and divers forms of government were left to arrange their modes of worship for themselves; irrespective and independent of each other, taking care only to hold fast the form of sound words, to acknowledge Christ their head, and enact nothing contrary to revelation. On the most careful examination of the Word of God, with respect to church polity, it is my impression that we have *no command*, and are therefore left to the free exercise of human judgment: but we have examples, and considering by whom the first churches were settled, as far as we can discern their mode of government and adapt it to altered circumstances, we should judge ill indeed to suppose our wisdom could suggest anything better. In the Apostles' days there manifestly was a judgment of the Church, to which in matters of conduct, I think not of faith, its members were to submit themselves, on pain of separation. I

say not of faith, because I find no instance of appeal in matters of faith except to the inspired Word, as written by the Prophets, and spoken by Christ and the Apostles. We have a very striking, and a very awful example of this mixed freedom and subjection, in the case, as I understand it, of Ananias and Sapphira. There is nowhere a command from God to the Church to have all things in common, nor any implied obligation on his people. so to do. "Whilst it remained, was it not thine own?" But the Church in the first ardour of brotherly affection, under the apostles' influence, had agreed to it. The practice was conventional, not compulsory. "After it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" the guilt was in the denial, the false profession, the faithless breach of a voluntary compact.

The attempt at community of goods is one of the many disorders that have arisen from taking the example of inspired men as of equal authority with their words. Whereas their words being the Word of God, immutable and infallible, are of perpetual and universal obligation; their actions are the actions of men, not always perhaps, under more than the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit; most likely to be right, but

possible to be wrong ; or if right for the occasion, not of permanent obligation under other circumstances. Doubtless those holy men are set for our own examples, in all godliness, as sometimes for our warning in their sins : and unless there be no value in wisdom, in knowledge, in experience, in zeal, in devotedness, in spiritual gifts, the divine approbation, and God's accompanying blessing, it were strange indeed that youth, and ignorance, and inexperience, and prejudice, and self-will, should set themselves against any forms or practices, or decisions, applicable to the present times, that can be fairly traced to the apostolic era.

The right of church communions, as of temporal estates, to change their mode of government by consent, or of individuals to remove from one communion as from one kingdom to another, on a just occasion, with the absolute duty of doing so in cases of corruption and departure from the faith, is clear to my understanding of the Word as well as of the workings of the Almighty. He doth with churches as with all temporal things, setting up one and putting down another. He who lighted and extinguished the mysterious Shekinah, sets the candlestick in one place and thence removes it to

another. Our wisdom is to gather round it where it is—our folly to be groping in the darkness where it has been withdrawn.

And yet, my friend, there is a feeling so native in every unvitiated mind, it must be of God's implanting, by which we think not well of one, who without good apparent cause, forsakes his country and his king, to become a strangers' liege—affects a foreign costume and a foreign tongue, and decries the institutions and habits of his country. We call him a dishonoured and degenerate son, who loves not his father's land, and warms not his father's hall, and lies not in his father's grave. And can it be less a thing of shame, God's word and our soul's benefit not so requiring, that we love not the temples where our fathers worshipped, the altars where our fathers brake the bread, the pastors that blessed them, and the prayers they said? I confess for myself, while I respect a pious dissenter as an honoured child of God, I feel to be ashamed for him as a dishonoured son of England. I say not this of the English Church only—for no passage in this world's story has ever seemed to me so great and glorious, as the resistance of Scotland to the compulsory intrusion of the stranger's ritual. But what

can we say, what need we say, of one who aims to disturb, and overthrow, and crush the institutions of his country—who speaks but to revile them, and acts but to destroy them; in return for protection, freedom, and indulgence? who will not uphold her sanctuary while the light of God is in it, and mourn her desolation when it is there no longer?

If there be an ordinance of God more sure, more direct, more universal in the Church of Christ than any other, it is that of a consecrated ministry, separated and set apart from the common uses and occupations of life, detached from its pleasures, and disburthened of its cares, to devote themselves, in body, soul, and spirit, to the services of the sanctuary and the instruction of the people. With the Bible in my hand, I cannot conceive this needs a proof—it is proved in every page. Painful, most painful it is to us, who are used to love the ministers of God, and wait their words as messages from heaven; the conducting Spirit within us, and the open Book before us, to prove at every word the power of truth: and with the full assent of the understanding and consent of the affections, to accept them as ordained indeed of God for the nurture and

sustentation of the divine life within us, that they may present us perfect in Christ Jesus:—most painful indeed it is, to be compelled, by their enemies and ours, to demand the credentials of God's ambassadors, and discuss the limits of their commission. I would rather be occupied in selecting from the Holy Book, all the terms of honour, of dignity, of love, with which the Almighty has distinguished these his servants—before which the names and titles of this world's greatness, sound but as the lordships of a holiday game.

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring glad tidings:” and if they be no longer angelic messengers or gifted seers, they gain in love what they lose of awe and wonder, by being brought within the compass of our human sympathies. Who would exchange the minister of the gospel now, subjected to the same word which he distributes, sustained by the same bread that he administers, taught by the same Spirit, upheld by the same faith, and stayed on the same promises as the weakest and simplest of his flock, sharing with us all that he receives, and having nothing but what he may impart? Examples of our faith amid the same infirmities, encouragers of

our hope amid the same discouragements, guides of our paths while their own is compassed with the same doubts and darkness; lighteners of our cross while they wearily bear their own; alms-men of a bounty on which they daily live; mediciners, as sick as those they heal; penitents, as heart-broken as those whom they absolve; sinners, as lost as those they are sent to save:—which of us would forego the touching sympathies of such a ministration, for unearthly voices or supernatural powers? We never rightly learned to love our God, till he shewed himself to us in a nature like our own; and few of us, I believe, reading the holy aspirations, the faith, the joy, the confidence of prophets and apostles, have not been conscious of something of a discouraging, or self-justifying recollection, that they had more than we have to uphold their faith, and advance their sanctification. Who but can recal some moment of temptation or despondency, when, about to take comfort in the experience of David, of Peter, or of John, we have said to ourselves, or Satan has said to us, ‘But these were inspired men?’ If our young aspiring ministry knew more of human nature than colleges can teach them, they would know that ecclesiastical

authority, however it might help them to enslave the understanding of their hearers, would never help them to affect their hearts. I can imagine no better cure for these high pretensions in an honest mind, really intent upon the spiritual improvement of his flock, than to read, were it possible, the hearts of a congregation while listening to a Gospel sermon: to note in what it is the power lies, and where the soul's response attests the preacher's gifts, and the working of the Spirit proves the Spirit's presence. They would learn thus, at least, how potent, how touching, how subduing comes the thought—'This man of God, on whose anointed lips we hang intent for words of peace and life, has reached his faith, his knowledge, and his joy, by a way as narrow, and a path as straight as that which he exhorts us to enter and to follow, and with no other means of strength and light than that which in Jehovah's name he offers us.' I say,—and there is not a heart of man that knows itself, but will respond to what I say,—the minister who comes forth to speak in Jesus' name, the message of salvation, would lose rather than gain in spiritual influence, if instead of deriving his fitness from deeper study of the word, and closer communion with

God, and greater abstractedness from the things of time, and appliancy to the Spirit's teaching, we believed him supernaturally invested with it by the on-laying of episcopal hands.

We know not, I suppose, how the preachers of righteousness under the Old Testament were elected—for we remark again, that they were distinct from the officiating priesthood of the temple. From the frequent mention of schools of the prophets, and sons, or pupils of the prophets, we might conclude there was some sort of preparation or education for the office. Of this we are certain ; they were chosen of God, and distinctly separated from the body of the people. The first act of our Saviour's public life, was to do the same thing—to take out and sanctify a ministry for the preaching of the Gospel under the new dispensation : besides the Apostles whom he kept ever with him to witness and record his doings, he sent forth the seventy to teach in his name. The Apostles subsequently ordained others—bishops, deacons, elders, presbyters ; whatever we understand by their respective offices, few things are more certain than that there were different orders and degrees in the ministration of the Apostolic Churches. These in like

manner ordained others, though I find nothing in Scripture to prove that the bishops only ordained. I rather conclude from what I read, that the ministry in general gave ordination, and in doing so were directed by the judgment of the church ; men being found fit for the holy office by their previous devotedness, their attainments in Christ, and their good report of all men ; not *made fit* by the on-laying of the hands of their ministerial brethren.

I cannot think of holy orders as more or less than a divine ordinance, standing on the same ground as every other ordinance, and comprising, like every other, two parts, never inseparably connected—that which is to be done by man, and that which is of God alone ; an outward and visible sign, and an inward and spiritual grace—the one human, fallible, and inefficient, the other divine, spiritual, infallible. There was a circumcision which was outward in the flesh, to be performed by man ; but there was also a circumcision without hands, performed of God alone. The wicked Ahab, and the idolatrous Jeroboam, received the one, but never had the other. There is a baptism which is of water, to the purifying of the flesh ; but it is not the baptism of the Holy Ghost

and of fire, to the renewing of the soul: many have the one, who perish for lack of the other. So likewise there is an ordination which is of man, and a calling of the Holy Ghost which may not accompany it. It is likely, that from the hands of the Son of Man, during his abode in the flesh, Judas received the same form of ordination as the other disciples; but he never received the ordination of the Holy Ghost, conferred on the others after the resurrection. Certainly from all other hands, the form has been without the Spirit: there have been at all times reprobate ministers, as there were wicked priests under the Jewish dispensation. "My prophets" and "your prophets," "My pastors" and "your pastors," so far from being identified, are set in perpetual and everlasting opposition. The Lord who saith of the one, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm:" "That I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets:"—by the very appellation MY prophets, seeming to anticipate the blessed Redeemer's words, "He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me"—the same Almighty Lord saith also, "Therefore hearken not ye to *your* prophets. I have not sent

them, they prophesy a lie in my name." "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pastures, saith the Lord." God has made ministers, and so has man; and the Church is called upon to discriminate between them; to reject the one and to receive the other. How well the world has discriminated, the Scripture tells us, "Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." The treatment which the one party has had of the other, all secular as well as sacred history discloses—and, how like is man to man, and earth to earth, and sin to sin—the annals of every church communion, perhaps of every parish, will confirm their story. "He that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the Spirit."

I have not to persuade you, my dear friend, of the fitness of a legally-supported ministry; but so much I will say, that as far as my knowledge reaches of secular history, there is not an idol-deity of wood or stone, monster, reptile, devil, or whatever else, of which a nation has

been pleased to make a god, but it has had some sort of appointed worship and compulsory service; has had more reverend treatment from the dominant authority, savage, and barbarous, and wild as it might be, than some would have a Christian government render to the true and only God.

Neither is it my intention to inquire by what mortal hand, a minister of God can best be made, for I believe he can be made of none. But the outward ordinance, like every other, has been committed to mortal hands, and must be performed by some one, in compliance with the design of God. If a man thinks he is to ordain himself, he may also think he is to baptise himself; and we can only say, such is not the divine order and appointment for the good government and spiritual sustenance of his people; and though it might be, we could not expect it should be so, that God would grant him the ordination of the Holy Ghost, out of the ordinary course of his arrangements, unnecessarily departed from; for we speak not of what may be when unrighteous hands refuse to do their office for the just, and cast out or keep out whom God has chosen. Most sure I am, that one who, spending his days at the great gaming-

table of this world's trade and commerce, under the secularizing influence of its gains and losses, thinks he is qualified on the Sunday, or the week-day evening, rightly to divide and administer the word of truth, whatever be the spirituality of his affections, knows as little of the mind of man as he does of the mind of God. The ministry must be chosen, separated, and set apart: and since it must, common sense would have told us, if the example of the Apostles had not, that the fittest persons to examine and ordain them, must be their predecessors in the Holy Office. Who is supposed fit to confer degrees of learning, but those who by learning have earned degrees themselves? Who admits to the practice of medicine, but the most eminent and experienced of our practitioners? Many a mortal life indeed has been sacrificed to an undue diploma; and many an immortal soul has perished under the ministration of an ignorant and ungodly pastor. To this we can only say, God is above all, He is pleased to put his treasure in earthen vessels, some to honour, some to dishonour:—the judge of all men must do right, and will ultimately lay the judgment on the right head; if in the plenitude of his mercy he bare it not

himself. We must obey and trust : and who can be supposed so competent to judge of the preparation, and qualifications, and spiritual endowments of a candidate for the ministerial order, as those who have borne its responsibilities, and fulfilled its duties. If we imagine the intentions of our Church fulfilled, the Bishop, a man whom knowledge, experience, and devotedness has raised to that high dignity,—“ Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayer,”—“ Blameless as the steward of God, just, holy, temperate”—influenced by a pure desire for the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind, for the perfecting of the body of Christ, of which he is the member unto such great honour : if we suppose such an one to ask in faith, and assume in hope, and expect in submission the accompanying gift of the Holy Ghost ; the candidate in lowliness and singleness of heart, and believing and purposing what he is required to say, taking the imposition of the Bishop’s hand in confirmation of his own faith, and God’s acceptance, from one more able to judge of his fitness than he is himself : it would be difficult, I think, to devise a likelier method to secure the

divine blessing on the performance of the holy ordinance. We know, alas, that this is oftentimes but a beautiful fiction ; that the dignitary who is supposed to communicate the Spirit, has never had it ; and he who is assumed to receive it, has never sought it ; and neither, perhaps, believes in His influence at all : and the blind will but lead the blind, till both fall into the pit together. Still, the Church has done what she could. Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, and he that planteth and he that watereth is nothing—it may be, worse than nothing ; it is God alone can give the increase.

But never let the man ordained by means so fallible, come forth in the pride of his new name, and swelling with the supposed apostolic afflatus, demand submission to his authority, while he sets his opinions above the written Word, denies the fundamental doctrines of the church to which he is ordained, and breaks, as in my conscience I believe these Oxford divines are doing, the solemnly given pledges of their ordination vows. If you doubt this, I recommend the Service to your perusal. For if, as I suppose, in this as in all her other services, the church in pronouncing her conclusion, assumes the good faith of the profession, the validity of

the one depending on the verity of the other, it may fairly be questioned whether such men have duly received even so much as the ordination that is made with hands.

Far other is the result that must attest the ordination of the Holy Ghost; for I anticipate your question, Whom are we to trust: whom are we to follow? Those only, my friend, who have for their ministry the witness of the Spirit and the word—the word that confirms the truth of what they teach, and the Spirit that makes their teaching influential and effectual. “My prophets,” and “your prophets,” “My pastors” and “your pastors,” are not so indistinct that nobody but Himself can know them; or if personally they may be mistaken, and are free of all earthly judgment, as the apostle claimed to be; we can do, and must do, what another apostle teaches: and mark, my friend, this admonition is not addressed to learned colleges, and theological halls, and episcopal council chambers; to the strong, the wise, and the experienced in the churches; it is a lady and her children, the simplest and weakest of the flock of Christ, who are enjoined to be the judges of what they hear; and taught of the word, and guided by the Spirit, to refuse and

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to resist whatever is not agreeable to their testimony. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought: but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

Remark the same apostle's address to the new-born of the Spirit, "Little children, it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he has promised us; even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have

received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Abounding in every part of Holy Writ are the appeals from the false teacher to the understanding, the knowledge, the spiritual enlightenment of the hearers, as members in particular of the body of Christ: not one case of reference in faith or doctrine to the decision of future revelations, traditions, councils, or interpreters. It would be strange indeed, if forewarning and foreshewing the heresies and divisions that would in these latter days distract the converts, the apostles should omit to mention the only remedy and safeguard from delusion—the decisions of the Church.

LETTER V.

THE SACRAMENTS.

“THY speech bewrayeth thee.” In whatever sense this was applicable to St. Peter, as denoting him to be of the company of the Crucified, it is a fact, that phraseology is a strong characteristic in every religious difference; and no weak instrument in the hand of the Evil One to promote and to perpetuate error and dissension. It has always appeared to me a mistake to say that names do not signify; that words are nothing. Words have their origin in meanings: the person who first adopts a phrase, has a design in doing so: he adopts it because it will best express or best disguise his meaning, as his purpose may be. To his own mind, at least, a definite idea is attached to the peculiar words and phrases in which the leader of a party clothes his sentiments. And if the

words and their meanings soon part company, the one presently standing not for, but instead of the other: it stands the badge and banner of a party, round which its proselytes gather and fight a l'outrance; and the less definite the ideas conveyed to the understanding, the more powerful sometimes is the influence on the affections of the simple, whom it is more easy and for some purposes more safe to mystify than to enlighten.

I think therefore that in things sacred, modes of expression are of immense importance; and that every honest mind, intending to propagate nothing but the truth, should be extremely careful to use accepted terms, and to use them in the commonly accepted meaning: most especially to adhere, as far as possible, to Scripture language, using it no otherwise than in the most strictly scriptural sense. The contrary of this verbal simplicity has been the first step to the most fatal and wide-spreading errors. Men have determined that the commonest word shall not mean what it has always been understood to mean; or that some new mode of speech shall be introduced to express the commonest truths; and volumes have been written, and sermons preached, and controversies maintained

misleading everybody except the few who have had sufficient penetration and candour to acquit the disputant of meaning anything he says. Most fearful is all such intellectual play, where the stake is the interest of immortal souls; whoever be the victor in the game of words, the simple are the victims. I allude to it purposely to advise you to be very suspicious of new words, new modes of speech; any manner of phraseology that strikes you as recent, especially as not Scriptural, when brought to bear upon spiritual subjects. The change of scriptural for scholastic terms, however correct in logic, may pass off error; but will never spread the knowledge of the truth.

The general paucity of Scripture language has struck me very forcibly in the writings of the Oxford school. But there is one mode of speech in general use amongst them so boldly at variance with the divine word, I could wonder it does not act as a caution to their rash and inconsiderate followers. To "preach the Church;" to "preach the Sacraments"—Where did they get this new commission of their ministerial office? Apostles had it not: Christ gave it not; He gave an express commission to administer baptism, and an inferential one to

administer as well as to receive the Lord's Supper. "But go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." "Preach the word." "Preach the Gospel." "Preach Jesus Christ—Christ crucified." It is written of our Lord and his apostles, that they preached many things as pertaining to the gospel, righteousness, peace, repentance, remission of sins, resurrection from the dead:—of John the Baptist only it is written, that he *preached the baptism* of repentance. John was a minister of the law, not of the Gospel. If this change of words in the ministerial commission means nothing, why not adhere to the language of Holy Writ. But it does mean something, and the words are better suited to the meaning, than you perhaps are aware. It is intended in their preaching to put the Church and the Sacraments in the place of Christ, and to preach salvation by them rather than by Him; inviting us to worship them instead of himself. We cannot charge this language with disguise, but we may well say to them that use it, "Thy speech bewrayeth thee."

The dominance of the lower nature above the higher, the sensual above the spiritual in fallen man, is in nothing more apparent than in the perpetual effort to make sensible what God has

made spiritual; and to subject to our senses what He has committed to our faith. The difficulty of realizing things unseen, is the great secret, I apprehend, of all image-worship. Incapable of reaching to the Great Unseen, realizing his attributes in his works, and holding converse with him in contemplation of them, men first made deities more tangible of those works and attributes themselves. But still the grosser nature was too strong; and when they had filled all earth and heaven with gods, the mere mental apprehension of them would not do, they must be moulded into shapes and forms that could be submitted to the outward sense: till finally the lifeless imagery became itself the God, and the bond-slave of sense was satisfied.

Must we apply this humiliating, this debasing truth to the professors of our high and pure religion, and say that Christians cannot hold communion with their God, without subjecting him to sensible apprehension? We must: and we will take the shame, if only we may have with it the grace to be ashamed, and know what we are doing. It was the preponderance of the animal nature, that with the full knowledge of the One and Only God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, would first have saints and martyrs

for mediums of communication with him, and finally wanted images of their saints and martyrs:—worshipped the cross in preference to the Crucified, and wrought for salvation by his relics, instead of by his name.

And now, in these last days, wherein we have thought that all is making ready for that purely spiritual condition when there shall be no more temple; for the Lamb shall be the temple thereof; and no more teaching, for that all shall know him; “What could he have done more for his vineyard, that He has not done,” to remove the distance that separates the Creator from the creature, and brings us into communion with Deity itself? He has passed that distance, infinite, immeasurable as it was; his tabernacle has been with men. He has become man. So mysterious the words are, we falter as we write them; and yet we feel at this moment the amazing value of the truth,—God is man. In the form of humanity he submitted himself to mortal sense, in the sympathies of humanity he still submits himself to mortal apprehension. He who once sent prophets, rising early and sending them, now comes himself; stands at the door and knocks. He who dwelt in the thick

darkness once behind the veil, now makes his abode in every believing heart. "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him." There is now no medium of communication between us and the Father, but the Spirit of him who is both God and man.

There is no longer a barrier between the soul of the believer and the Triune God, save that which remains in us, the downward bearing of our fleshly nature, overpowering still the spiritual sense, in its efforts for communion with the things unseen. "Make us gods to go before us," is still the earthly nature's cry. Give us Church, Sacraments, anything to lay hold of, and rest our faith upon, "for as for this Moses," this Jesus, sole Mediator of the New Covenant, "we wot not what has become of him." We cannot see him, feel him, hear him. We cannot realize his presence and hold communion with him. We are bidden in vain to eat his flesh and drink his blood; to feed upon him, to partake of him; we are hungry, we are athirst, the divine life is ready to die within us: Who will go up for us to heaven to bring Christ down; who will descend for us

into the deep to bring Christ up again from the dead?

“These be thy gods, O Israel,”—Gaze upon these material emblems of immaterial things, till you persuade yourselves they are the spiritual sustenance that your souls require, the medium of communication between you and Christ, by which he fulfils his promise of divine sustentation in the impartation of himself: through which, as it were, his own vitality passes, to become communicable and available to your necessities. Believe when you put the consecrated bread upon your lips, the divine aliment enters by it; think when you take the cup into your hands, it does for you all that you expect from his most precious blood. Invest the elements with his attributes and powers, and let it be to your apprehension a substitute, a *locum-tenens*, to do instrumentally what Christ does virtually, as vice-regal power performs valid acts of royalty. Alas! when it has come to this, the eye is already lowered, the mind is intent upon the representative, instead of on Him assumed to be represented. Expectation hangs intent upon the bread and wine, the hand is out-stretched to *them*; the knee is bent to *them*. Already the

spiritual process has become a mental one,—spiritual communion with Christ has become mental contemplation of the elements,—feelings, imaginations, faith itself, all is occupied in realizing and feeding upon the mysterious properties of the bread and wine,—not one, no not a single faculty of the soul is left free for communion with the Son of God in heaven. We have turned our backs upon the sun, and fixed our eyes upon his image in the stream,—we see there what he is, what he does: but we have lost sight of him;—his works, his attributes, are becoming as it were existences apart from Himself: the process to idolatry is working fast. Gaze on, gaze long enough, the spiritual has yielded to the mental; the mental will sink into the sensible: the bread and wine will presently BE THE GOD, and the bondslave of sense will be satisfied once more.

I know the earthliness of my own natural heart, too well to ask how this can be. But I do wonder that any soul should consent to such a transfer, that has once spiritually eaten the flesh and drunk the blood of Christ; that has but for one moment held converse with him in the Sacrament, as spirit communes with spirit, without sight beheld, without hearing heard,

without utterance spoken with, a *presence* more *real* than that which mundane invention has attempted. Embodied in matter, He could be subjected only to the senses : the senses may deceive us, and if they do not, can spirit feed on matter ? But that interior consciousness of the soul by which the presence of Jesus is realized within us, is neither sense nor faith, but something more sure than either ; it is that nameless, incommunicable certainty which shall hereafter supersede them both : and does in some few blissful moments here, suspend the operation of the one, and make the other intrusive : love does not like a witness or a medium. Yes, my friend, I do wonder, and but that I see so many Christians falling into it, I should disbelieve, that one who has ever enjoyed the *real spiritual presence* of Jesus in the Sacrament, should tolerate the idea of a carnal one, or endure the notion of a material medium between themselves and Him. I could as well have expected that the disciples at Emmaus should sit down to feed upon the bread, in the breaking of which their risen Lord was known, instead of arising in the fulness of their joy, and departing to communicate their blessed vision. Facts prove, nevertheless, and let those

that stand take heed lest they fall,—facts prove that this downward propensity is too strong for all. “It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” The spiritual was to supersede and to excel the bodily presence. The Apostles found it so: though they had known Christ after the flesh, it was not then they “were always confident.” St. Paul ascribes his confidence to this very fact, that fleshly had been exchanged for spiritual communion. “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”

But the first annals of Church history will show, how soon the grosser nature began to operate, in trying to bring back from heaven the human body of the Lord, and submit it once more to the witness of the senses: the wish was parent to the thought, and the thought, a metaphysical abstraction perhaps at first, became the parent of Popish idolatry in its grossest form: the worship of the host, and the sacrament of the mass. The Communion once again purified at the Reformation, guarded, as in our liturgy I think it is, by expressions the most carefully exact, and accepted and enjoyed

in its inward and spiritual grace, by so large a body of evangelical worshippers, what is it now our grief and shame to hear? The cry once more of the sensual nature for a sensible deity, a bodily-present Saviour in the holy Sacrament. O shame! If there were in my bosom but a conceived wish that so it should be, I would hide my head in the dust before his altar; unworthy indeed to look upon those sacred pledges of his love, incapable to taste the high companionship of that mysterious feast.

It is no design of mine in what I write, to lower the character of the Sacraments, in their inward and spiritual sense. *They* lower them, who set the sign up for the thing signified, the palpable for the mysterious, the act of man in them for the work of God. *They* degrade the efficacy, who vest it in the external form; and they degrade the external form itself who think that a mortal hand can give it efficacy. Of that of which the Sacraments are the sign, and in the due reception are the pledge and seal, I have conceptions which might be thought too high: which would indeed be too high, if they are the poor fallible workmanship of created hands; if the regenerating water can be crossed upon an impenitent brow, and the

bread of life be taken into uncircumcised lips. If I believe that the body and blood of Christ verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, is that of which He himself says, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him,—As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by me,"—I can as soon conceive that the humanity of Christ should perish, as that any soul of man, so eating it, should fail of everlasting life. "Thou in me and I in him." Is it an act that can be reversed? Can that which is made one again become two, that one should die and the other live eternally? "They two shall be made one flesh. This is a great mystery, but we speak as concerning the Church:" and we speak Scripture language. Our Fathers ate manna in the wilderness and are dead. Of the consecrated bread and wine thousands have eaten and are perished. If Christ, in any manner, bodily or spiritually, were, in the elements, could this be so? Could any man partake and perish? If it be said, He is only present to the faithful participator:—truly the

benefit may and does depend upon the faith of the recipient ; but faith cannot change a fact : “ Can their unbelief make void the law of God ? ” If episcopal hands have made the God, and baptized lips have eaten him, can unbelief make him to be no God, or them to be no eaters ?

Christ being spiritually present with, but apart from the elements, is partaken of only by the faithful, and they who take the elements merely, perish in unbelief, as thousands have done. But if He, or his saving power, or his life-giving energy, were in the elements, all who took them would take that, whether they believed or not : unbelief could not make void the fact : and that it should make void the benefit, the fact remaining, in the face of our Lord's plain unconditional declaration, that whosoever eats shall live for ever, is to my mind an inconceivable impossibility. “ Because I live, they shall live also.” This would be no sequence, if they who eat his flesh and drink his blood, could perish through unbelief.

Adopting the Romish doctrine in its grossest form, viz. that the wafer is not virtually, as our sacramentarians would rather teach, but

actually the human body of Christ, I should conceive that the body into which it entered could never see corruption, on the same ground that I believe the soul into which Christ has entered can never taste of death.

In like manner, of the Sacrament of Baptism : If the baptism of the Holy Ghost be that of which St. Paul says, " Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death : that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life "—and again, " As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ : " " For ye are all one in Christ Jesus, and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise : " then is it not a thing to be done and undone. " That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. " If a man be still in the flesh, " carnally-minded, which is death, " he has not been born of water and the Spirit, for to " be spiritually-minded is life. " Here are no contingencies, by which he who is regenerate, born from above, may subsequently prove himself to be still of the earth : the

only after-discovery to be made, is that he that walketh not after the Spirit but after the flesh, is flesh: and has not been born again of water and of the Spirit: nevertheless he has received the baptism which is made with hands,—the outward and visible sign. In the words of our Catechism, than which I can find none more adequate to express my meaning,—the inward and spiritual grace of Baptism is said to be death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, whereby the children of wrath are made the children of grace: language perfectly conformable to that of the Apostle, and of our Lord to Nicodemus; we suppose therefore that it means the same thing. The requisitions are, repentance, to forsake sin, and faith, to believe the promises of God: requisitions which when they come to age, the baptized are bound to perform: and so they would be, had they never been baptized, for men are called upon every where to repent and believe the Gospel: the ordinance no more creates the obligation than it does the benefit represented by it. But they do not perform them, that is a fact against which it is absurd to contend; the baptized in infancy do not always repent and believe, do not walk in newness of life, do not

put on Christ. We may therefore ask, have they forfeited the new birth unto righteousness, or have they never had it? Does unbelief and impenitence prove that the soul has not been born again from above, or does it make void the results of the new birth, so that that which is regenerated remains in nature unregenerate? I would remind you as before, that unbelief cannot change a fact. The person has been baptized with water whether he repents or not,—so either he has been regenerate of the Spirit whether he repents or not, and then repentance is no part of regeneration; or being impenitent, he has not been regenerated of the Spirit, and then baptism and regeneration are not the same thing,—one has taken place, the other has not: the outward and visible sign of baptism has been without the inward and spiritual grace. Grant this, and it is all that we contend for. But you say it was a conditional fact; if the promises of our baptism had been kept, the Spirit would have accompanied it. The fact then waits upon the result, not for proof, but for existence. The thistle waits for the grapes to be a vine, which if they come not is a thistle still: the regenerate child waits for the fruit of the Spirit to be a child of God: which

if they come not, it is still a child of wrath. As a proof, this is most true; but not as a cause. Or suppose it were a cause; if faith and repentance instead of being the consequence of the new-birth from above, were the actual originating cause of the change of state, then the consequence could not ensue without the cause: and the child, proving impenitent, was still not in its baptism made a child of God. But you affirm that it was; you teach it to believe so; you contend with us that it is so: notwithstanding that whether you conceive faith and repentance to be the cause, the condition, or the fruit of the new-birth, you cannot in their absence substantiate the fact, their baptism notwithstanding.

It appears to me you have but two ways of escaping this conclusion. Perhaps you mean something else by baptismal regeneration, than that which the Apostle describes as the baptism of Christ, and our Lord exhibits as the new-birth of the Spirit, unto life eternal: or otherwise you believe that the gift of life in Christ, whereby the children of wrath are made the children of God, may be afterwards forfeited, and the act of adoption be recalled. It has been my object to bring you to this position: in hope to show

you the consequence of the language you have recently adopted respecting baptismal regeneration. Would it were more beside my purpose than it is! But alas! this point at which consistently I think you must arrive, is the very point to which Satan would have you come; to which the present corrupters of our most holy faith would bring you. They are not men who see not the issue of their scheme. I am not writing to enlighten them—they know it and they mean it. They mean to take the beginning of your salvation in their own hands, and put the end of it in yours, that He whose work from first to last it is, may be sufficiently dishonoured and disowned. They mean to teach you that the Sacrament of Baptism, committed to their hands as the successors of the Apostles, is efficacious to the regeneration of the soul from a state of nature to a state of grace. Without consent, without consciousness, and without contingencies, save that of performance by legitimate hands, the ceremony makes of you a child of God and a member of the Church of Christ, cleansed and justified from all previous sins—that is, of course, from original sin only, none other having been committed. Having thus brought you, ipso facto, into the kingdom

of God, they there abandon you to your own care : and verily the conclusion is worthy of the premises ; from that time forth you are justified by your works. Christ is no more available to you—his blood has no further power—his atonement no further value ; faith is at an end, for it has no promise to lay hold upon : if any man sin, he has no advocate with the Father, or propitiation for his sin ; he must expiate it himself with tears of blood and bitter penance. This is their language, if we may appropriate that which belongs alike to the devotees of the papacy and the paynim : and has been the doctrine, before it was theirs, of every individual of mankind who has known his sin, and has not known his Saviour. Their claim to originality, if they have any, is in reducing the sacrifice of the Son of God to the smallest possible value without actually denying it ; making it totally inefficacious for the atonement of actually committed sin ; of which there is before baptism no capability, and after baptism no remission.

You, my friend, to whom I write, have no such thought ; but I would induce you to examine whither your notions tend. When you profess to believe that regeneration takes place in baptism, do you mean by regeneration any

thing different from that which is spoken of in the Scriptures above quoted—"Alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "By one spirit are we baptized into one body." "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Ghost." If you do mean something else than this, I can only remonstrate once again on the danger of giving to Scriptural terms any other than a scriptural sense; for I cannot find that in the Bible regeneration has any different signification. If I may suppose that you understand no more by it, than that your infant child, conceived in sin and born in iniquity, is cleansed from the Adamic taint of sin by imputation of the blood of Christ, before it has known to do either good or evil:—true, but this was done before, was finished on the cross, was effectual before Baptism was instituted, and is available before it is administered. Do you think the living soul that perishes in your womb is not regenerate by the blood of Christ? Baptism is the sign, the seal, the pledge of that most precious truth—but it is not the necessary instrument: still less the thing itself. Or say that you mean by regeneration only admission to the Church below: to church communion,

church-membership, the church's instruction, and the church's prayers : and all the blessings that should follow on the parental fulfilment of the baptismal promise in the government and education of the child. You must allow me yet another question—Do you mean admission to the Church of England, or the Church of Christ below : the net which is let down to catch of every kind, both bad and good ; the field in which the enemy has sowed tares among God's most precious wheat, and both are growing together ;—or the fold of which it is said “ No man can enter but by me ? ”

If the former, I grant you all you ask ; but I cannot adopt your word : great as these benefits really are, the Scripture does not call them Regeneration. I expect you will say, ‘ But the Church does.’ I am not careful to answer this—I am not writing as the apologist of the established church or of its formularies ; and if I think the latter might have been better worded than they are in this particular, I am not disposed to accept two or three isolated passages, indited by men without prescience of the construction that would be put upon them, or so much caution as would be exercised were they to be written now, against the general

tenor and bearing of the Liturgy entire. If our Church in her Articles explains to me her own meaning with respect to Baptism, I am bound to accept it as her meaning, in preference to a single sentence in the baptismal service. I might say the same with respect to the first clause of our Catechism, apparently so positive and unequivocal as to the new birth of the soul in the performance of the baptismal service. But I prefer candidly to declare that I cannot justify that sentence: and would not allow a child to repeat it until capable of appreciating the explanation of Archbishop Secker and others, that it is a *conditional* declaration of the privileges pertaining to those who subsequently fulfil the renunciation, or baptismal vow, which immediately follows. In this I should not be without encouragement from the church itself, which in charging the Sponsors, that the child be taught the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, seems rather to imply that this beautiful compendium of Christian doctrine, adapted to the faith and trust of the most experienced believer, is not altogether intended for the instruction of a young child. I have not been able to learn when the first response was added to the Catechism, or by

whom; we know it was not originally there:—the Catechism of our Reformers began with what is now the second question, the Renunciation or Vow, and ended with the Lord's Prayer.

The careful, exact, and I think most Scriptural explanation of the Sacraments was subjoined in the time of James the First. This first clause seems scarcely in accordance with it. One thing, however, appears to me most certain: whatever our church teaches as the value and effect of Baptism, she does not consider the rite completed, till publicly renewed and ratified at Confirmation, when the child is of an age to answer for itself, and to fulfil what is required of them who come to be baptized—repentance, whereby they forsake sin, and faith, whereby they believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament; otherwise she would not withhold the communion till after confirmation. In the meantime, if it be so that our church uses the word Regeneration in some other than the Scripture sense, I have only to wish she did not, for it has been a fruitful source of dissension. The Scripture remains the same.

I have but one other supposition to lay before

you, viz. that giving the term Regeneration its full Scriptural meaning, you may conceive that the new condition of the soul is an actual but not a permanent change ; so that, risen with Christ, and one in Christ, the regenerate soul may at any time be separated through sin, and perish in unbelief. And this I apprehend is the view taken by most of those who contend for baptismal regeneration : whether they believe, with the Oxford party, that we afterwards stand by works, without reference to Christ, and fall by irremissible sin committed after baptism : or with our more evangelical teachers, that we stand by faith in Christ, and fall away for want of continuance in Him. This last is too deep an inquiry for our discussion now. I believe otherwise : I believe there is no second death to them that are born again of the Spirit : no after condemnation to them that are made one in Christ. But suppose it not so : suppose that the seal of the Spirit upon the children of the adoption may be broken, and the living members of Christ return to death in sin ; and the difficulty of supposing every one renewed in baptism contrary to subsequent experience to be thus removed :—Still I find no where in Scripture a promise or an intimation that this

change of nature shall attach to the ordinance of baptism; and if there be not a promise, creeds, and opinions, and practices of men, are a poor foundation for our faith. Belief supposes a testimony—and if there be no testimony of God to that effect, there can be no exercise of faith upon it. God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; to be found of them that seek him; to answer all that pray; to save all that believe. Why do we prefer to leave promises we have, and depend on something that we have not? Where is there a single promise in God's word of efficacious grace attached to the ordinance of baptism; and what right have we to believe, to hope, or to expect without a promise? We can gain nothing from example drawn from Scripture—for there is no evidence of administration before conversion. "Repent and be baptized." "If thou believest thou mayest," &c. The inference that children were baptized, grounded on the certain practice of the first churches, and the divine precedent of circumcision, I think is entirely against the reliance now placed upon the initiatory ceremony—since we know certainly that circumcision made not all to be Israel, whom it made to be of Israel—or

rather that circumcision was not that which was outward in the flesh.

All this, I feel, presents no obstacle to a Papist, or a genuine Puseyite. They want no Scripture proof of any thing; and they have not been afraid to say that from Scripture nothing can be proved. If this be so, we are indeed of all men most miserable. We want not arguments to defend our faith: we have no faith to defend; for we positively refuse all other testimony in things pertaining thereto. But you, my friend, have not yet reached the fathomless abyss of ignorance into which their estimate of Holy Writ would bring you. If you had, I should not have troubled you with my views on this or any other sacred subject: professing to know nothing, absolutely nothing, but "It is written," "How readest thou?"

There is a Baptism of the Spirit and of fire, but it is Christ's alone to give. I do not say regeneration accompanies it, for I believe it *is it*. Once only that purifying fire was subjected to mortal sense, made visible at Pentecost. Since then, it has been a secret operation within the soul, of which man can have no part, and no perception save by its results: even as an instrument, no part but that which

the sword has in the hand of him that wields it: incapable of good or harm if that hand shall lay it down. To this Baptism, salvation is promised: or perhaps I might rather say again, it *is salvation*; for the new birth unto righteousness is the first link of that inseverable chain, and "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Of this the baptism of water is the sign at all times; the seal, if it have taken place before; the pledge, if our vows be afterwards fulfilled: whether it be at any time the instrument I cannot tell. No eye has marked the invisible operation. In the mind of an adult, the conscious operation of the Spirit is understood to have preceded the ceremony, as in Scripture examples, Acts iv. 24. In the mind of an infant, there can be no witness to the fact: and should there be the earliest and most indisputable evidences of regeneration in the character of the child, it cannot be said whether it were sanctified in Baptism, or like the prophet Jeremiah, and the Baptist, in the mother's womb: the blissful acceptance, perhaps, of many a pious mother's prayer, that need not wait upon an earthly ceremony. Wanting, therefore, any cognizable instance of God's so working, and having, as I

believe, no specific promise to that effect, I can speak of the instrumentality of the baptismal rite only generally, as all religious ordinances are instruments and means of grace: channels through which the vital Spirit runs. From the believing prayer of parental dedication, too much cannot be expected. "If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them, of my Father which is in heaven." Strange indeed it seems, that uncomforted by promises so full as these, extended to faith and repentance in all subsequent times, the Christian relies on the sufficiency of his own faith in the baptism of his child, or of his parents' in his own—of which he knows nothing, unless it happen that he knows too much—for that assurance which he cannot find in spiritual dependence on the things unseen.

Surely it is the same debasing spirit still—"Shew us a sign; that we may see and believe thee—What dost thou work?" The Lord has yielded to our weakness; he has remembered that we are but dust, and has provided for our mixed, imperfect nature. He has given us signs, seals, pledges, memorials, the baptismal water, and the sacramental elements—memo-

rials of what He has done, pledges of what He will do, signs of his method of operation, and means in which he operates; visible seals affixed to his deeds of grace; witnesses after the manner of men, to the eternal, everlasting covenant of his mercy: a permanent repetition, as it were, of the oath, "wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that we might have strong consolation that have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."

These signs in his abounding pity He has granted. And what do we with them? Just what the heathen did with the proofs and witnesses of his eternal power and godhead in the works of the creation: when they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." We make gods of the font and the altar, oracles and magicians of the anointed priesthood; "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the creator." "The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth a silver chain." The Church ordains the minis-

ter, and the minister consecrates the water or the bread; and the material, perishable, worthless thing becomes the trust of our souls and the assurance of our salvation—becomes our Saviour—contains first his powers, and finally Himself. True, there are resting-places in this idolatrous descent: but I think there is no break in the chain, by which he who pauses upon one link, may not be in close proximity to the next.

Howbeit there are some who have *not paused*—who have not hesitated to call themselves their Maker's maker—to charm the material elements into atoning deity with their assumptuous hands, and offer it a sacrifice for sin upon an earth-built altar; to bless the baptismal water into life-giving deity, and create with it anew the souls that died in Adam. That they thus fall in with the downward current of our souls, the tendencies of our fleshly nature, is the secret of their success, and the fearful ground of our apprehensions from them: they need no help from that spiritual influence which is contrary thereto, and has a perpetual conflict to sustain, in elevating the soul to holy converse with the things unseen:—with Him, “Whom not having seen

we love, whom while yet we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It needs Jehovah's power, the united force, the divided offices of the Triune Deity to raise the soul; it needs no force to sink it: therefore we are afraid, and "Blessed is he that feareth always."

"But ye are wise," "but ye are strong." Fathers are not afraid to spread their tables with these pernicious writings: masters are not afraid to take up their defence in presence of their servants: women, boys, the young, the inexperienced, the impressible, are not afraid to leave the beaten track, and run curiously to the very edge of the abyss. They do not mean to fall. Mean to fall! What gamester ever meant to lose his all, when he ventured his first throw?

LETTER VI.

OF THE EVILS TO BE APPREHENDED FROM
THE ENTERTAINMENT OF THESE VIEWS.

‘ BUT after all,’ my friend replies, ‘ what is the harm of these things?—they promote inquiry, and induce men to read ; the discipline of the church establishment has been too lax ; much of its ritual has fallen into disuse, and the people have been withdrawn from their allegiance to it. No doubt there is much error in these views : we do not intend to go all lengths with them, but why not follow them as closely as we can ; and give due attention to their statements without being led by them ? We find in their writings much that is good ; and, like the bee that gathers honey from the poisonous herb, we can profit by what is good, and reject what is evil.’ This is high language,—

but, my friend, God has not called his people bees—He has called them sheep, the dullest and most defenceless of all creatures; the most apt to stray away and lose themselves; of whom it is said that when once they are separated from the flock, they are never known to find their own way back again. And I think it is the emblem we should love the best, since it is that the blessed Redeemer has chosen for himself—“the Lamb of God.” “Feed my sheep.”

To those who hold this commission, I quote a higher authority than my own. ‘Read and study the Scriptures carefully, wherein is the best learning, and only infallible truth; they can furnish you with the best materials for your sermons; the only rules of faith and practice, the most powerful motives to persuade and convince the conscience, and the strongest arguments to confute all errors, heresies, and schisms. . . . Meddle with controversies and doubtful points as little as may be in your popular preaching, lest you puzzle your hearers, or engage them in wrangling disputations, and so hinder their conversion, which is the main design of preaching. . . And as you ought to preach sound and orthodox doctrine, so ought you to deliver God’s message *as near as*

may be in God's words ; that is, in such as are plain and intelligible, that the meanest of your auditors may understand ; to which end it is necessary to back all practical precepts and doctrines with apt proofs from Holy Scripture ; avoiding all exotic phrases, scholastic terms, unnecessary quotations of authors, and forced rhetorical figures ; since it is not difficult to make easy things appear hard, but to render hard things easy is the harder part of a good orator as well as preacher.—*Abp. Usher.*

If such be the instruction best adapted to the flock of Christ, we shall not be benefited by the super-induced study of school divinity and antique Fathers ; the only reading likely to be promoted by the present excitement. There is an often-quoted saying of somebody, with reference to the pre-occupation of the mind with divine truth, that 'the sack which is filled with wheat will hold no chaff : ' I am sure the converse is equally true—the sack that is filled with chaff will hold no wheat. The sermon that is full of antiquity and apostolicity will not be full of Christ. The table that is strewn with Oxford Tracts will not be burthened with the sound divinity of our own older writers : and I doubt if the insulted Book

of God will bear them company. The mind that is intent upon renewing the obsolete forms and ceremonies of the church, will not be intent on retaining the vital energy that has given an increasing efficiency to her ministrations; such as, persevered in, would put her enemies to shame. The time that is spent in the morning and evening services, will not be spent in the closet, or at the family altar. The back that is *not turned* upon the altar, will be turned on Christ; and the heart that is set upon fasts and saints' days, will become indifferent to the weightier matters of the faith. It is vain to say that it will not be so; all who know any thing of man must know it will—"If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." Ye will not put your trust in both—ye will not value both. "The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." He must not, and he cannot,—God has said it,—and man has a thousand times proved it. The moment he lays hold on any other trust, he relaxes his hold on Christ; and exactly in proportion as human means and institutions are overvalued, Christ becomes less precious. Alas! there are but too plain symptoms now of this melancholy sequence. Our

beautiful church service, by reason, as I conceive, of increasing light under the teaching of the Spirit, has been relieved, by disuse, of the some few remnants of popish ceremony, of which, when that yoke was broken, the useless incumbrance was retained ; as was natural in men who, tearing themselves from the embraces of an apostate mother, loved by association and revered by habit, much that they were called upon to relinquish ; and desired to retain all that they sinlessly could. Disburthened by silent discontinuance of what it might have been venturous formally to abridge,—our public services have in late years held their rightful place ; most devout, most wholesome, most divinely blest accompaniments of the Gospel preached. But I will not shrink from saying, what, the more I study the word of God, and the longer I observe the workings of his grace, I become the more convinced of—that the great commission of the ministry, as ambassadors of God, is to preach : “ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the day of vengeance of our God : to comfort all that mourn ; ” and that to this his accompanying grace is promised : primarily, not subsidiarily to the ministration of the sacraments and other divine

ordinances. This is my judgment, formed on the written word; to which alone I refer you, to examine and decide if it be not so. My observation and experience are like unto it. Indifference to preaching has characterised all spiritual declensions in the churches: and every revival of religion has been produced by, and accompanied with, an increased zeal and desire for the preaching of the Cross. In proof of this, I refer you to the history of every church in every bygone time. But you need not read far. Most of us can refer to the days of our childhood, when a ten minutes sermon—if sermon it might be called, that unction of truth had none—once on the Sunday, was enough for ears polite—and when our clergy were the sportsmen of our fields, the stewards of our race-courses, and the beaux of our ball-rooms; and the “Family Bible” was a “Sunday Book.” Howbeit those were days in which our grandmothers wore black in lent, and our church-bells rang duly, we say not how persuasively, every Wednesday and Friday through the year; the penance of the rapid parson, and the droning clerk, whom the attendance of some half-dozen card-playing septuagenarians, brought within the compulsory limits of the law. We

have seen great changes, and these are things out of memory, save to our gratitude that they exist no longer.

But what in scarce the third part of a century has made so great a difference? "The foolishness of preaching"—the zeal for preaching, and the demand for preaching; first out of our church, and subsequently in it. Our Gospel preachers have changed the tastes of the people, and the opinion of the people have affected the whole character of the ministry. The moral essays have succumbed to empty pews; the dissipated churchman has become the marked exception among a body of truly pastoral clergy; the knowledge of divinity is now necessary to reputation in the profession of it; self-interest looks for spiritual gifts in the incumbency; and where the truth is to be heard, even the week-day bell no longer rings in vain. We have been witnesses of this great change; and we know it is attributable to God's blessing, not upon sacraments, and church services—for they were always there: but upon the evangelical preaching of the Cross in the churches. Must we live to see these steps retraced? Are our ministers to be taught once more that it needs no sacred study to read a

form of prayer, and no spiritual experience to deliver sacraments, and nothing but ordination and a cure, to make a minister of Jesus Christ?

Shall our people be taught again, that all who love or need the word of life, must forsake the church, and betake themselves to the meeting-house? We trust, and yet we fear. With deepest grief we see the leaven working far distantly from where the insidious mischief lurks. We hear the altered tone of some whose hearts we think unchanged: some who owe the conversion of their souls to the preaching of the Gospel; who have loved it better than their necessary food; have been cheered by it in their sorrows, and checked by it in their sins; and would have made many sacrifices rather than forego it. Now they discover that preaching does not signify, they go to church to pray. We tell them, had they always thought so, they had not been what they are. Why not? there is a liturgy sufficient for the exhibition of the truth. It has not been found so; and it has not been written so. The commission and command of Jesus is to preach, and the blessing of the Father has ever been upon the hearing of the gospel. We appeal to Scripture, and we appeal to facts; we appeal to the

experience of your own souls, which you are now dulling into indifference, and chilling into stone, by withholding yourself from the sustentation God has appointed for you : to feed, not upon *prayer*,—that was never separated from the hearing of the truth, in public or in private ; as if the urging of God's gracious message upon you, should supersede the responses of your soul to Him ; or the invitations of his grace indispose you to communion with Himself. They never did, they never could. You *know* they did not ; you know you never joined the public services with less fervour, because you came to hear the truth from the pulpit : possibly you know, that till you heard it from the pulpit, you never felt the value of the Liturgy, or enjoyed those services at all. Alas ! the Liturgy itself is to share the degradation : the value is to be in the place where it is said, the lips that utter it, the parish church, the canonical hours, the clerical vestments, the disused ceremonies. Give us rosaries at once to count our paternosters, for our most spiritual liturgy has become a dead letter too ; waiting upon this mummery to give it efficacy.

The Beneficent Being who has appointed prayer, not “ the prayers,”—who has ordained

social ordinances and public worship, has appointed preaching, and bidden us to take heed what we hear. If we wilfully forego the one provision of his grace, I doubt if we may expect a blessing on the other: if we attach more importance to ecclesiastical arrangements, times, and places, and allotted ministrations, which, however indispensable to a church establishment, are yet but secular and human, than to the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, in rightly dividing to all the word of life, I doubt, I much doubt, if we may expect his blessing in either. We prefer the factitious to the real: we shall have it for our reward: and learn the wisdom of our choice in the increasing sterility and lifelessness of our souls: first irritated, then reconciled, then indifferent, and finally insensible.

But example,—you plead for example: well, suppose it so, that we who were used to hear from the pulpit the glad tidings of salvation, to gather of the heavenly manna as it fell, and come away refreshed and strengthened, armed and encouraged, for the week's conflict with the powers of darkness, do now, for example's sake, betake ourselves patiently to the allotted pew, enjoy our own approbation instead of the ser-

mon, and return with nothing gained from it, but a lesson of indifference, which every repetition of the abstinence will confirm. Let our servants, and our children, and our poor, who have no previous knowledge to fall back upon, or after-reading to appeal to, be persuaded by our example that preaching does not signify, they need only "go to church," and repeat the right prayers in the right place, till the establishment be again what it was some half a century ago. It is a ground on which it can no longer stand. The times are changed. Titles, and dignities, and high-sounding names, that used to be as watch-words by which to pass unquestioned, act now but as challenges to closer investigation. Things that once stood upon the prejudices and habits of the people, can now stand only on their judgment and their affections. The church must be what they want, or she will be nothing to them.

If you should even succeed in persuading the mass of our people to go to church, as the Papist goes to mass, to save their souls, to receive absolution from the priest, and commit their eternal welfare to the church, while they remain in ignorance: things would not rest there; once taught to take the ex-

ternal for the real, the sensible for the spiritual, the populace of these enquiring and discussing days, would feel, and they are right, that there is more sensible excitement, more external devotion, and more ostensible security in the church of Rome. But I believe that you could *not* persuade them. The great, and the rich, and the happy, might be persuaded, because a ceremonial religion suits them; they do not like the doctrines of the cross; they would rather do many things than wash in Jordan, and be clean: they will adopt your modern popery because they like it. But the poor have but little taste for high church opinions, and very little taste in these days for submission to authority of any kind; they love, and ever have loved, the preaching of the Cross: and therefore as many of them as care for religion at all, will seek the gospel wherever they can find it; where they want of efficient preaching in the church first taught them to find it: and we may have again, what in this country has been so fatally tried before, the religion of the aristocracy in open conflict with the religion of the people. I think that nothing but evangelical preaching in the churches can prevent this. I believe every enemy of the Establishment would

hail with delight the acquiescence of those who adhere to it in even the external peculiarities of Puseyism, for they are signs of things. Forms which at another time were at the least harmless, and to some minds might be helpful, like the meats offered in an idol's temple, have gathered harm from their intent.

“To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” Let them bring back their services, and their saints'-days, and their crosses, and their genuflections, “neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.” The form is nothing, the place is nothing, the hours are nothing, the font is nothing, and the altar nothing. At another time it were enough that every man be persuaded in his own mind, and that whatever is done, be done in the faith of the Son of God; for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. “But there is not in every man this knowledge,” and now that they tell us that these things are necessary to salvation, are efficacious to salvation, are in fact parts and portions of salvation, through which we are regenerated, justified, sanctified, and saved—“Do we provoke the

Lord to jealousy ? Are we stronger than he ? ” If any man see us, who have knowledge, sitting in their churches, conforming to their practices, adopting their language, surely we sin against the brethren, and sin against Christ, and become participant in the dishonour of the one, and the destruction of the other.

So much I have said about the *externals* of the new scheme, because the Church of England is dear to our hearts, as the birth-place of our souls, and the fold in which we have hitherto found sustenance and safety. Its present dangers are the theme of every tongue ; religious separation, and political disaffection, and Popish encroachments, are as the trenches dug by a besieging army round about this honoured fortress of the faith, preparing for its overthrow. Myself, I fear nothing for the church, but her corruptions. As long as she is a light that giveth light to them that are in her house, the gates of hell will not prevail against her. But if they who worship within her walls must once more sit in darkness ; if the shechinah of evangelical light is to be withdrawn, her clergy assisting, and her people consenting ; if the time has come that God has done with her ; we know that she must pass away as the most

hallowed instruments of this world have done ; and it may be for us ' to watch her fall, incompetent to save.' " The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever."

But indeed, my friend, this is not all, and this is not the worst. The noblest things of this world are foredoomed to ruin, and though it goes to our hearts to have it so, it is but a little sooner or a little later.

There is more than this at stake : there is more to be lost to us than the Church of England. The glory of God, the work of Christ, the ministration of the Spirit, the essential doctrines of revealed truth, every just ground of hope and promise for eternal life, is assailed by these new teachers, and betrayed by those who give them entertainment. Popery has said she asks no more than they concede. Infidelity might well say the same of some things they have written. They need ask no more ; for in my most conscientious judgment I believe, whoever has gone the whole length that the Oxford School would lead them, may take their choice between the two : they stand at a point from which Popery and Infidelity alike diverge, without a barrier between themselves and either. The witness of the Spirit

and the word are gone : there is only to choose between a stultified submission to human authority or a sceptical independence of all authority whatever : the last by far the more consonant to the spirit of the age, and therefore I think the most to be apprehended.

Such is the path in which it is thought *no harm to go a little way*, to take our children a little way, our congregations a little way, in search of "something good" that *may be* there. Something good? St. Paul determined not to know any thing among us, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. There were many good things then ; and men worked evil with them just as they do now : there were church communions then, and baptisms then, and apostolic ministers : and Christians overvalued them, and exalted them, and made Saviours of them in the stead of Christ, (1 Cor. i.); and because they did, and because it is the very bent and being of our nature so to do, lest the cross of Christ, should be made of none effect by the wisdom of words, St. Paul determined to know nothing among them but Christ crucified : the "preaching of the cross," a stumbling-block to them that loved a sign, loved the super-human instrumentality of the

ceremonial dispensation ; and foolishness to them that sought the knowledge of God in the records of human learning, and the schools of men. “ But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” What “ good things ” want we, where this is to be found ? What good things look we for where this is not ? It is not found in the teaching of these men ; it is not in their words, in their designs ; it is not in their hearts, for if it were, they could not thus divide the Christ of God : divide his work, the sufficiency of his atonement and the efficacy of his blood, among holy orders, and sacramental signs, and ritual observances, self-justifying works, and sub-baptismal penance. I had almost said it is not in the hearts of those who like to sit by, while the seamless robe of his meritorious righteousness is thus shredded and distributed, among these various means of salvation, and remedies for sin. And why should I not say so, when I find it thus written,—“ Because they received not the *love* of the truth, that they might be saved.” I know not why God has told us he is *Love*,—when there are so many things He is besides, and all his attributes must have an

equal excellence ; except because love is the only thing humanity can depend upon. Justice is too terrible. Truth is too inflexible. Mercy may, or it may not. But Love, is it not earth's sole abiding-place, of which had we been left to choose, we should have made our God entire? And if love be the only thing that we can trust, so is it the only thing in us that can be trusted. " Because they received not the *love* of the truth." Many have received the truth, who never received the love of it. The understanding has been enlightened, and for a time persuaded : but the heart has no preference for the truths received, and is willing to be dissuaded, whenever anything sufficiently well-recommended is presented in its stead.

These converts are willing to be justified by the faith of Christ, if so it is to be ; but they were as well pleased it should be any other way. They consent to build their faith on Him alone, as long as it appears there is no other trust,—but if there be a Church, a baptism, an absolution, it is as well, and they will change their ground. Such believers, and there are hundreds and thousands such, have received the truth, but they have not loved it : and love is the only thing that does not like a change,

that cannot be dissuaded, cannot be turned to the right hand or to the left from the fixedness of its purpose and pursuit. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." It was more than *faith* spake there. Am I not right in saying, that those who are prone to changing do not love the truth as it is in Jesus? do not wish it should be truth? are not averse to share with other trusts the confidence they were used to repose in Him alone? "Will ye also go away?" "Lord! to whom shall we go?" When the disciple of Jesus has not believed, but *tasted* that he is gracious,—has not heard, but *found* that he is precious,—has not been merely convinced by divine testimony that salvation is all of grace, Christ the author and finisher of our faith, but with the full consent of his affections desires to have it so,—could not without grief consent that it should be otherwise:—could not bear (and when *could* love bear it?) to owe to something else what it has been used to find in Him,—nay, for those who will not say so, have not loved,—would not like to be anything, have anything, do anything that might lessen their dependance and their debt to Him:—to the disciple that has so learned Christ, novelty and antiquity

will plead alike in vain: whatever means or assurances of salvation they may propose, are less than he has, and so much more than he wants. If all were thus, we need not fight these giants: we might mourn for, and defy them. "Charity never faileth. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be knowledge, it shall cease." Knowledge may bring us to the cross of Christ, and faith lay hold on the hope that is set before us: it is only love that can never be "moved away from the hope of the Gospel."

"Have I been so long time with thee, and hast thou not known me, Philip?" Surely there are hearts among us, which should sink with shame at the repetition of these words: hearts that might have learned the sufficiency of Christ in the trial they have made of him; the efficiency of his Spirit in the proof they have put it to. Does Peter forget the look that shamed his guilt, the voice that stayed his sinking? Does Jonah forget the horrors of the deep, or David the deeper horrors of his blood-guiltiness? Does Hezekiah forget the concession to his prayer, or Hannah her heart's wish granted? that we see them all running together after these new Saviours? Is the past

all forgotten,—the hour of near and dear communion, dark midnight hours, when there was not and could not be an interpreter between,—the heart's unfolded guilt, that might not and could not have sought priestly absolution,—and that full sympathy of the crucified High Priest, which alone has ever met the stricken soul's necessities? Are these forgotten, and all the by-gone hours of grief assuaged, and guilt removed, and wakened hope and renovated joy, passed in the hearing and reading of the word? “Go and shew John again those things which ye do see and hear,” which themselves have seen and heard, and tried and known, but now are willing to exchange for Fathers and Councils, and Apocryphal traditions. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” They have had the word of life, they have preached it, they have professed it, they have lived upon it for years, but they are not satisfied: they find it distasteful. Let them have, instead of it, delusion and a lie. They have known my way of salvation, and have not liked it: let them try their own. The free forgiveness, the perfected salvation, the justifying righteousness, the indwelling Spirit, the sustaining manna

that came down from heaven, my people have had it till their souls have loathed it; now they may take their way and torment their bodies, and afflict their souls, and renew their penances, and recal their saints, and trust their baptismal waters, and feed upon their consecrated bread. We hear it constantly affirmed, that it is not likely God will permit men so pious, and devoted, and self-denying, to be misled. My friend, God does permit it. He has said He will permit it, "delusion and a lie," the reward of their distaste and guilty preference. "They did eat and were filled: for he gave them their own desire: they were not estranged from their lusts. But while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them."

This is to me the most fearful thought of all. The Gospel has been widely preached amongst us, and the influence of the Spirit has extensively accompanied it; numbers have been added to the church daily, of such as should be saved; and whoever desired to be saved, might find within the church all spiritual light, and truth, and consolation. "These forty years the Lord has been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." But now, "We remember the fish that we did

eat in Egypt freely," we will have the old things back again. "Our soul is dried away: there is nothing but this manna before our eyes," nothing to feed upon, or to depend upon, but Christ, the teaching of his Spirit and his word. I have never been afraid of what man can do, whether against the Church in England, or the Church of England; but I confess I am afraid what God may do under so great a provocation.

Meanwhile, the time is at hand: without fixing dates or calculating years, we believe that the time is at hand. The first watch of the night is passed, and the second watch is passed: and if we know not when it may be, we know not when it may not be. "Little children, it is the last time." The second thousand years are nearly passed since that was written, and "now is your redemption nearer than when ye believed." The peculiar position of the Church of Christ in the present age, as distinguished from the ages past, is that of a church expectant and prepared, "a bride adorned for her husband." It is a position in advance of all that has preceded it: a higher, a happier, a more spiritual dispensation than any of those through which in the gradual developement of her Lord's

design, she has been led. The days of her adoption, the days of her tutelage, the day of her majority are past; and what has she now but to prepare for her espousals? "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, those who by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Is it a time to be looking backward, to retrace our steps, to recal the former things, to be laying again the foundation—or rather, to be removing and exchanging it, for so it is—instead of going on to perfection? "The bride, the Lamb's wife has made herself ready." Or has she put off her ornaments, and forgotten her attire, to resume her picture books, and quarrel for her toys? temporalities, and precedencies, and forms, and names, "Which all are to perish in the using."

THE END.

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